

ARMENIAN PARTICIPATION IN THE LEBANESE LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS DURING THE PRESIDENCY OF EMILE LAHOUD (1998-2007)¹ PART II

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INTRODUCTION

After the decision of the Constitutional Court to annul the election of Gabriel Murr and consider Ghassan Moukheiber as the MP for the Greek Orthodox seat in the partial elections of Northern Metn in 2002, the situation in Lebanon was gradually exacerbated. Christians escalated their opposition to the presence of the Syrian forces in Lebanon through the Kernet Shahwan group of MPs. They were supported by the Maronite Patriarch, Cardinal Nasrallah Sfeir. A shift was also noticed in the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) and Druze leader Walid Jumblat's position. He invited the Maronite Patriarch to the Shouf area and showed tendencies for future cooperation with the Christian opposition.

A new cabinet with 30 ministers and headed by Rafik Hariri again was formed on April 17, 2003. The new cabinet included two Armenian Orthodox ministers, Sebouh Hovnanian and Karim Pakradouni. The Armenian political parties, however, objected to Pakradouni's representation of Armenians and noted that he was the leader of the Kataeb Party and was not involved in Armenian community life. Nevertheless, this did not prevent the Tashnag minister from staying in the cabinet, nor the Beirut Dignity Bloc Armenian MPs Hagop Kassardjian, Yeghia Djeredjian, Jean Oghassapian, and Serge Toursarkissian from cooperating with the Prime Minister or President Emile Lahoud, whom they visited on August 25, 2003.²

Pakradouni, on the other hand, did not endear himself to the Armenian community by being present at the Turkish Embassy reception on October 23, 2003.³

Within Hariri's cabinet, Minister of Economy and Trade, Marwan Hamade, and Minister Pakradouni had a bitter argument about who should represent Lebanon at the meeting of international monetary institutions. Pakradouni insisted the Minister of Finance should do so. Some wondered whether this was an indirect confrontation between the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister.⁴

During the May 9, 2004 Beirut Municipal elections, Hariri left out Pakradouni's Kataeb Party and formed the Beirut Unity List, led by Abdel Meneem Ariss, which won the elections.⁵

Pakradouni and the Kataeb Party he led, on the other hand, had secured support from six other political parties, including Hezbollah and the Tashnag Party, in case of a veto against him. However, after Hariri met the Syrian secret services chief in Lebanon, Rustom Ghazale, Pakradouni and his party were left out. Tamam Salam, Hezbollah and the Tashnag Party were the new members of the Beirut Unity List. Subsequently, Pakradouni advised Hezbollah and the Tashnag Party to join the list.⁶

All three Armenian parties, the Tashnags, the Huntchags and the Ramgavars, supported Hariri's list. The Armenian candidates were the former members of the municipality, Apraham Matossian, whom *l'Orient-Le Jour* described as supported by the Tashnag Party, Varoujan Kantarjian, supported by the Ramgavar and Huntchag Parties, and Serge Joukhadarian, supported by the Armenian Catholics.⁷

It was stressed that Hariri did not want to change most of the incumbents. Dikran Aprad, the Armenian Catholic incumbent, was replaced however. *Aztag* presented the candidates as those of the Tashnag Party.⁸ This did not prevent *Zartonk*⁹ and *Ararad*¹⁰ from supporting and actively campaigning for the Beirut Unity List, publishing the group's picture and urging their partisans and sympathizers to vote for the list. After the elections MP Kassardjian said they had agreed with the Tashnag Party that the candidates represented all the Armenian sides, but the Tashnags did not respect the agreement and considered the candidates to be theirs. Despite the fact that the Unity List did not provide any explanations, the Ramgavar Party participated and voted for the Unity List.¹¹

The highest vote of the victorious Unity List was 59,393 and the lowest vote was 48,447. The votes the Armenian candidates received were as follows: Serge Joukhadarian 53,517, Apraham Matossian 53,455, and Varoujan Kantarjian 52,623 votes.¹²

Concurrent with the Beirut municipal elections, the elections of *moukhtars* took place. All three Armenian parties had candidates. The Tashnag Party Lebanese Central Committee Information Bureau announced that out of the 9,244 Armenian votes in Beirut their candidates in Medawar, Ashrafieh and Rmeil had received 7,086 votes, and in Zokak el Blat, Minet el Hosn, Ain el Mreise, Mouseitbeh, Bashoura, Saifi, Mazraa, and Ras Beirut 1,049 votes. Their rivals in Medawar had received 506 votes.¹³

On a parallel line, significant developments had taken place within the Armenian political parties since the partial elections of Metn in June 2002.

Hagop Kassardjian, who was the president of the Central Council and the Lebanon District Council of the Ramgavar Azadagan Party, gave up his Central Council Chairmanship at the Paris conference of the party in 2003. He still faced a revolt in Lebanon by the so-called Ramgavar Azadagan Reform Movement. The latter held a reception to mark the party's 83rd anniversary as well as the 61st anniversary of the independence of Lebanon in Hotel Promenade, Zalka, on November 22, 2004. Among the organizers were Nar Khachadourian, Hovsep Emirian, Eddy Gosdanian, Hratch Kouyoumdjian, Avedis Dakessian. Among those present were the Armenian Orthodox Community Prelate, Bishop Kegham Khatcherian, former PM Rashid Solh, Fouad Makhzoumi, former Minister Arthur Nazarian, Garbis Markarian and clerics representing the Catholicosate of Cilicia.¹⁴

The Lebanese District Council of the Ramgavar Azadagan Party, likewise, gave a dinner on November 27, 2004 at the Pavilion Hotel in Biel, downtown Beirut, on the same occasion under the auspices of PM Hariri. The presence of the Ambassador of Armenia, Arek Hovhanissian, Hariri's Dignity Bloc Ministers and MPs,¹⁵ as well as MP George Kassarji, former Minister Shahe Barsoumian and former MP Andre Tabourian was noted. Both Kassardjian and Hariri spoke.¹⁶

Kassardjian said in the forthcoming electoral campaign the Ramgavar Party would be with Hariri. The latter confirmed his alliance with the Ramgavars, saying that together they would participate "no matter what the conditions or pressures."¹⁷

The Huntchag party Lebanon Executive Body expelled Mihran Seferian, Hagop Tossounian, and Viken Kaprielian from the party ranks,¹⁸ apparently as they had visited president Lahoud as representatives of the Executive Body, though they were not entitled to.¹⁹

The case of former Minister Barsoumian, who had been released from prison, was examined by the Parliament. On December 16, 2003, in a closed session and by 66 votes against 9 blank ballots, a parliamentary committee was formed to study his case - a decision hailed by Barsoumian.²⁰ The Beirut Dignity Bloc Armenian MPs considered the accusation against him as politically motivated. They supported Barsoumian after joint discussions with him.²¹

The three Armenian political parties continued to hold meetings from time to time. In their August 28, 2004 meeting they decided on the joint commemoration of the 90th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide and agreed to form a committee.²² Eventually, on December 20, 2004, the Huntchag Central Council, the Tashnag Bureau and the Ramgavar Azadagan Central Council published a joint declaration on the matter.²³

Local newspapers wrote that an effort was being made to shift the registration locality of Armenian voters from the Bekaa or Beirut electoral districts to North Metn. *Safir* warned about the accumulation of a massive electoral force in Metn, where strong leaders could be defeated, and this would not be in the favor of Armenians.²⁴ The Armenian Communist weekly *Gantch* in its turn blamed the Tashnag Party leadership for this action.²⁵

As the constitutional term of president Lahoud was coming to its end, Jumblat publicly opposed the amendment of the constitution that would allow the prolongation of the president's mandate by three more years, as advocated by pro-Syrians. PM Hariri also opposed the constitutional amendment and the subsequent prolongation of the presidential term of office, as his relations with the president were not good. However, after a visit to Damascus, where he met Syrian President Bashar Assad, Hariri felt obliged, with his followers,²⁶ to vote for the proposed changes that allowed the prolongation of the president's term till November 24, 2007, notwithstanding the UNSC Resolution 1559, which warned against this prolongation.

Jumblat and his bloc as well as Kernet Shahwan MPs voted against the constitutional amendments. Soon after, a car bomb attempt on the life of Jumblat's close friend, minister and MP Marwan Hamade, failed. A little while after the amendments were voted, PM Hariri resigned, and a new government was formed on October 26, 2004 by Omar Karame, whose main task was to frame a new electoral law for the legislative elections of 2005. The new cabinet had 30 ministers including Sebouh Hovnanian and Alain Tabourian, both advocated by the Tashnag Party.²⁷

On November 29, 2004, *Aztag* published the Tashnag Party Lebanon Central committee (TPLCC) appeal to its adherents and supporters to participate in the mass rally organized by the pro-Syrian parties against the UNSC Resolution 1559.²⁸ The demonstration took place on November 30, and protesters estimated that 250,000 participated, including supporters and members of the Tashnag Party.²⁹

On December 17, 2004, PM Karame promised within two months "a new just and equitable" electoral law, which would satisfy the majority of the Lebanese. He also promised to see that the legislative elections would be "regular and transparent" and that the electoral process would "guarantee equity and equality of opportunity to all Lebanese".³⁰

Minister of Internal Affairs, Suleiman Franjie, was in charge of presenting this new draft law to the Cabinet and eventually to the parliament.

The TPLCC was very active in the pre-electoral period before the draft electoral law was presented to the Cabinet. They visited President Emile

Lahoud on November 29, 2004,³¹ PM Karame then Minister Franjie on December 2,³² and Speaker Nabih Berry on December 6.³³ Through various visits to leading political figures, the party made clear it was against the electoral law of 2000 and, consequently, against the electoral division of Beirut according to that law; it favored a division more along the lines of the 1960 electoral law.

The Ramgavar Azadagan Party and the Huntchag Party were not as active as the TPLCC in conducting visits. On December 16, MP Kassardjian and the Ramgavar Azadagan Lebanese District Committee met the Interior Minister, Franjie, to express their view regarding the new electoral law. They favored the division of the electoral districts in line with the Taef Agreement stipulations, where the *Mohafazats* were indicated as electoral constituencies.³⁴

On February 2, 2005 the TPLCC celebrated the 114th anniversary of the party at the Coral Beach Hotel. Representatives of the President, the Speaker and the PM were present, as well as the Prelate of the Armenian Orthodox community, Bishop Kegham Khatcherian. On behalf of the party, Hovig Mekhitarian announced they welcomed any initiative which would rectify any breach of representation, particularly that of the Armenian community in the parliament.³⁵

Before the draft law was presented to the cabinet, MP Nabil de Freige claimed "dividing the capital into three electoral districts in accordance with voters' sectarian affiliations equates to "clipping Hariri's wings". It was noted that the Beirut III electoral district, which would be the largest in area and number of voters, would mainly include Shiite and Armenian voters and would secure the representation of pro-government candidates in parliament.

Implementation of the 1960 electoral law was considered by some "a violation of the Taef Agreement". Hariri in turn said he had "no problem with the division of Beirut into *qadaas*, but would oppose any draft electoral law which divided the capital into "confessional electoral districts".³⁶

On January 24, 2005, Franjie put the electoral draft law on the agenda of the Council of Ministers. According to newspaper reports, PM Karame and 14 other ministers, including Hovnanian and Tabourian, were in favor, 3 were undecided, and 11 were against it.³⁷

MP Atef Majdalani argued the partitioning of Beirut "plants the seeds of sectarian strife in Beirut" and asked "is this a tool to combat a person called Rafik Hariri?"³⁸

The draft electoral law stipulated the following:³⁹

In Beirut I, which comprised Mazraa, Mouseitbeh, Ras Beirut, Ain el Mreise, Minet el Hosn and Marfa, 4 seats were allotted for the Sunnites,

one for the Druze and one for the Greek Orthodox. The district counted 76.7% Muslims, 20.6% Christians.

In Beirut II, which comprised Bashoura, Zokak el Blat, Rmeil, Medawar and Saifi, 2 seats were allotted for the Sunnites, 2 for the Shiites, 3 for the Armenian Orthodox, one for the Armenian Catholics, and one for the Evangelicals. The district counted 48.6% Muslims, 49.1% Christians.

In Beirut III, which comprised Ashrafieh, one seat was allotted for each of the Maronites, the Greek Catholics, the Greek Orthodox, and the Minorities. The district counted 86.2% Christians and 13.7 Muslims.

In the Metn constituency of the Mount Lebanon electoral district, 4 seats were allotted for the Maronites, 2 for the Greek Orthodox, and one each for the Greek Catholics and Armenian Orthodox.

In the Zahle constituency of the Bekaa district, 2 seats were allotted for the Greek Catholics, one each for the Sunnites, the Shiites, the Maronites, the Greek Orthodox, and the Armenian Orthodox.

The Bristol Committee composed of Jumblat's PSP, Kernet Shahwan group, Lebanese Forces, National Bloc, Democratic Meeting, Democratic Renewal and, for the first time, a Hariri Bloc MP, Bassel Fleihan, met in Hotel Bristol on January 28, 2005 and denounced the electoral divisions of Beirut.⁴⁰ There was a concern among the loyalists that Hariri would eventually fully join the opposition or the Bristol Group, as it became to be known.

Once the draft electoral law was on the agenda of the Cabinet, Minister Hovnanian, on behalf of the TPLCC, met President Lahoud on January 4 and stressed that they supported the idea of small electoral districts.⁴¹ Further visits concerning electoral matters were made to the President on February 4 and 11, 2005 by Minister Hovnanian.⁴²

A visit on January 21, 2005 to Hezbollah General Secretary Hasan Nasrallah by minister Hovnanian and a delegation of the TPLCC caught the attention of observers, as the Armenians and Shiites, according to the new electoral draft law, were to have their MP representatives in Beirut II. The new draft electoral law file was discussed.⁴³

The American Ambassador in Lebanon, Jeffrey Feltman, met Catholicos Aram I on 11 February, 2005 and discussed the USA role in the Middle East peace process, the electoral situation and the role of the Lebanese Armenians.⁴⁴

The Ramgavar Azadagan Electoral Bureau started functioning as of February 1, 2005, as an announcement in *Zartonk* indicated.⁴⁵

MP Oghassapian objected to the new draft electoral law, claiming it was partial, controversial, tended to gather the opponents of Hariri in Beirut II and tended to force him to seek election in Beirut I, in order to isolate him and reduce the number of his bloc's MPs.⁴⁶

In an LBC TV interview, Interior Minister Franjie attacked Hariri, whom he accused of being a "sectarian" bent on whipping up the sensitivities of the Sunnites, and described him as the top master of the opposition. He said PSP president and Shouf MP Walid Jumblat worked for Hariri and had changed his political stance, adding that "the country would be free of sectarianism if Metn MP Pierre Gemayel and some members of the Kernet Shahwan Gathering left the country".⁴⁷

The Daily Star wrote "pro-government circles said contacts backed by Damascus were ongoing with Hariri to prevent him from joining the opposition (and maybe cooperating with some pro-government forces in Beirut and including them on his list). In return the government would respond positively to his demands regarding Beirut."⁴⁸

It was obvious to all observers that the government intended to reduce the chances of Hariri's success in Beirut. In an editorial, *L'Orient-Le Jour* wrote "le decoupage tourmenté de la capitale n'a visiblement d'autre objet que d'etriller la principale (et pas trop discrete) composante Sunnite de l'opposition, l'ancien premier ministre Rafic Hariri".⁴⁹

Hariri counter-attacked. On January 31, 2005 he met the vice-president of the Shiite Supreme Council, Sheikh Abdel Amir Kabalan, who was in favor of making the *Mohafazats* single constituencies. They discussed electoral issues. Afterwards Hariri declared his relations were good with Shiites and Armenians and he hoped for fair elections. He added he would present his candidacy in the most difficult electoral district of Beirut.⁵⁰ Most took this as Beirut II, where Armenians were allotted 4 seats, and the Shiites two.

Another controversial issue was article 68 of the new electoral draft law "stipulating the outright closure of any media institution that violates the limits set by the government for electoral campaigns and advertising." Franjie said this stipulation was transformed into a law when Hariri was in power. In reference to the Hariri-Jumblat joint political plan, Franjie claimed "Hariri is the biggest plan to open the door for dissension. He buys consciences and dignity." He added "if the opposition who want small electoral districts vote against the law, they will be responsible for its failure".⁵¹

Gen. Michel Aoun, who was in Paris and was described as "the Trojan horse of the elections", considered this allegation insulting and said he did not want any quarrels with the opposition, yet added he had incited no one against Syria. Aoun said he would return to Lebanon once the negotiations with the authorities were over, on a date decided by him.⁵²

Jumblat declared on February 6 that the division of Beirut was directed against Hariri and that Lebanon should not have the attitude of an enemy towards Syria but it was also impossible that Lebanon be ruled by Syria.⁵³

Hariri met the Beirut Maronite Prelate, Bishop Boulos Matar, on February 10 and again stressed the electoral division of Beirut should be changed along with articles 63⁵⁴ and 68 of the electoral law.⁵⁵

On February 8, 2005 in Ain el Tine, the Speaker's residence, a meeting of all pro-government forces⁵⁶ was held including the Speaker, the PM, Nasrallah, and Michel Murr and declared they were against UNSC Resolution 1559 and stood for Syria's defense, the Taef Agreement, and support to the resistance. The TPLCC representative, Mekhitarian, who was among the participants, was elected to the 16 member committee created to follow up the Ain el Tine decisions. The committee included Talal Arslan, Elie Skaff, and Suleiman Franjie. Nasrallah noted that the electoral law was a detail of a larger problem.⁵⁷

On February 13 Jumblat met Hariri at his Kraytem residence and discussed electoral and political issues.⁵⁸

On February 14 parliament convened to debate the draft electoral law, which had been approved by the Council of Ministers. On that day, after attending parliament Hariri left with MP Bassel Fleihan. On his way to his residence, near the St. George Hotel on the Beirut seafront area, a massive explosion took Hariri's life and those of his security guards and severely injured Fleihan. The latter passed away after suffering from his burns for two months. The opposition blamed Syrian intelligence for the assassination.⁵⁹

There was a massive outcry, and a three-day official mourning period was declared. Hariri's death was condemned by all, including the TPLCC, the Ramgavar Azadagan District Council and the Huntchag Executive Body of Lebanon.⁶⁰

Hariri's funeral, in which hundreds of thousands participated⁶¹ on February 16, assumed a political aspect. Thousands shouted "Syria Out". On February 17, Baha Hariri, the eldest son of the late Hariri, presided a meeting of Hariri's "Beirut Decision" Bloc. The Bloc proclaimed the funeral was a referendum showing the illegitimacy of the government and indicated its willingness to participate in the legislative elections at the constitutional deadline.⁶²

On February 28 there was a general strike, and a massive demonstration was held. In the parliament MP Bahia Hariri (the sister of the assassinated MP Hariri), Marwan Hamade, and others demanded the resignation of PM Karame, who resigned during the afternoon session, to an outcry of joy from the thousands of demonstrators near Hariri's tomb in Martyrs Square, downtown Beirut.⁶³

In parallel line international pressure on Syria escalated. There were demands for an international investigation and trial. On March 5, 2005,

President Bashar Assad of Syria announced in the Syrian parliament that the Syrian forces would withdraw to the Bekaa.⁶⁴

On February 20 the Speaker called for a meeting at his residence in Ain el Tine. Among the participants were PM Karame, Vice-Speaker Murr, Vice-PM Issam Fares, 20 ministers including Franjie and Hovnanian, Hezbollah's leader Nasrallah, Syrian Popular Party president Jebran Arayji, Kataeb Party chief Pakradouni, a delegation of the TPLCC, as well as other personalities, including former PM Rashid Solh. The meeting stressed the need to maintain national unity, condemned Hariri's assassination, demanded an investigation of the crime and expressed preparedness for Arab or international cooperation in this matter.⁶⁵

That same day a requiem was held for Hariri in the St. Kevork Armenian Church in Nor Hadjen, in the presence of MPs Djeredjian, Kassardjian, Oghassapian and Toursarkissian, upon their initiative. The Huntchag and Ramgavar Party leadership was represented. In a speech afterwards Djeredjian said they demanded an international investigation into Hariri's murder.⁶⁶

On March 2 representatives of the three Armenian political parties met at the Shaghzoyan Center, discussed the commemoration of the 90th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, condemned Hariri's assassination, demanded a speedy investigation and exposure of those who organized and carried out the murder and demanded a government of national unity.⁶⁷

On March 3 the TPLCC met Nasrallah and examined the situation, condemned the assassination, called for speedy investigations and the formation of a national unity government.⁶⁸ The Ain el Tine Committee, issued a statement, which was read by MP Bassem Yammout (who had earlier defected from the Hariri bloc), stressing the need to stop public attacks, escalatory steps and demonstrations, which could lead to anarchy.⁶⁹

On March 5 the spiritual heads of the three Armenian denominations in Lebanon, Bishops Khatcherian and Ashkarian and Rev. Haidostian, met in the Armenian prelacy, and condemned Hariri's assassination, stressed their policy of positive neutrality and dialogue, appealed for a national unity government, with the Taef Agreement as its guideline, and welcomed the joint meeting of the three Armenian political parties.⁷⁰

The TPLCC faced difficulties among its own sympathizers and the Armenian community at large. The opposition motto of "freedom, independence and sovereignty" did not leave the Armenians indifferent, irrespective of their denomination or party affiliation and sympathies. In an article in *Aztag* headlined "To be with one does not mean to be against the other", Hratch Varjabedian, denied the claims circulating among Armenians, that "the Armenians, mainly the Tashnag Party, had taken

sides, and were petrified in their policy". The columnist added that it is comprehensible that the environment of East Beirut, where Armenians live, with its religious majority, can suggest more "genuine sympathy" and a different political attitude, but a political party such as theirs, can not be led by sentiment, and he noted "political thinking is different than the popular logic." The article denied that the "Tashnag Party is petrified in its stands, as proved by its visits to all sides and the dialogue. True, these do not mean cooperation, but we must be open to all, understand all and be understood by them... [So it remains to] our people and especially the youth", not to be influenced by the propaganda of this side or that, but to follow logic as expressed by the three Armenian communities and the three political parties' joint communiqués.⁷¹

Indeed, the TPLCC had successive meetings with MP Michel Pharaon,⁷² the Mufti of the Republic Sheikh Mohammad Rashid Kabbani,⁷³ former Minister of Foreign Affairs MP Fares Boueiz,⁷⁴ *Nahar* editor and Kernet Shahwan Group member Gebran Tueni,⁷⁵ Maronite Prelate Bishop Matar,⁷⁶ Interior Minister Suleiman Franjie,⁷⁷ MP Boutros Harb of the Kernet Shahwan Group,⁷⁸ National Bloc leader Carlos Edde,⁷⁹ former PM Selim Hoss,⁸⁰ former minister and one of the leaders of the Mustaqbal Current Fuad Siniora⁸¹ and others.

However, a different reality emerged. On March 8, 2005, a massive rally and demonstration took place in the downtown Riad El Solh area, with the participation of hundreds of thousands of - what the opposition said were pro-Syrian elements - the Hezbollah, Amal, Marada of Franjie, Syrian Nationalist Popular Party, Baas Party, Talal Arslan's Lebanese Democratic Party, Tashnag Party, Kataeb Party, and Nasserite Movement members. The demonstrators carried pictures of presidents Lahoud and Assad, Lebanese flags, mottos against UNSC Resolution 1559, the USA and Israel, and expressed their solidarity with Syria. The speakers demanded the exposure of the reasons for Hariri's murder and the punishment of the perpetrators.⁸²

That same day, the TPLCC sent congratulatory cables to the Syrian leadership on the 42nd anniversary of the March 8 revolution in Syria.⁸³

The Ramgavar Azadagan Lebanon District Committee, in an official declaration published in *Zartonk* on March 10, 2005, condemned Hariri's assassination, demanded an international investigation, welcomed the Lebanese youth's positive movement and expressed its solidarity with the Martyrs' Square movement of sit-ins under the Lebanese flag and the motto of "freedom, sovereignty, independence" and also with the Lebanese Resistance. It refused any foreign intervention, and declared its support for the implementation of the Taef Agreement.⁸⁴

The Huntchag Party Lebanon Executive Body, in a communiqué dated March 11, 2005 and published a week later in *Ararad*, declared the reason for the political crisis in Lebanon was the irresponsible attitude of the authorities, which did not reflect the seriousness of the murder of Hariri. The communiqué welcomed the Lebanese Youths' meeting in Martyrs' Square, demanded a neutral international committee to investigate the murder, expressed its support to the Taef Agreement, the Lebanese Resistance, and Lebanese-Syrian links and condemned the cheap propaganda of accusations such as "enemy collaborators" or "treason" against Lebanese personalities.⁸⁵

MPs Kassardjian and Oghassapian criticized the pamphlets against the Mustaqbal (Future) TV station, the Beirut Decision Bloc and the Mustaqbal Current.⁸⁶

The Armenian MPs of Hariri's Beirut Decision Bloc, Kassardjian, Djeredjian, Oghassapian, and Toursarkissian, in their joint communiqué of March 12 expressed allegiance to Hariri's memory and appealed to the Lebanese Armenians to participate in the mass rally planned for March 14 by the opposition. Furthermore, they said they were against political and sectarian nominations, stating that the majority of the Armenian MPs were outside the Armenian Bloc, which had nominated Karame during the consultations for the appointment of a new PM. President Lahoud had appointed Karame to form the new government on 11 March.⁸⁷

MP Djeredjian said the Armenian MPs had not participated in the Bristol meetings while the Tashnag Party had participated in the Ain el Tine meetings and it had a representative among the 16-member Ain el Tine follow-up committee. So it was the Tashnag Party and not the others who had departed from the positive neutrality policy of the Armenian community.⁸⁸

The Foreign Affairs Minister of Armenia, Vartan Osganian, advised the Lebanese Armenians to uphold their stand of positive neutrality, as they had during the Civil War of 1975-1990.⁸⁹ *Aztag* noted that in 1975 unity was maintained, in which the Soviet Armenian leadership had its role, and added that the people now expected such a stand from the Armenian parties.⁹⁰

However the Armenians were not neutral this time. Both *Zartonk* and *Ararad* published calls for Armenian participation in the March 14 rally, as *Aztag* had done for the March 8 rally. The Armenian Catholic clerics, under the presidency of Patriarch Nerses-Bedros XIX, held a meeting on March 6, examined the situation, and declared that the various views expressed by Armenian Catholics were based on objectivity and it was the "martyrdom" of Hariri which had created this situation. They noted that those in Martyrs' Square, especially the youth, who believed in truth,

independence, and freedom were to be blessed. They advocated national unity for all communities to eliminate the danger of civil war and called on all to rally around Lebanon.⁹¹

The public rally of March 14 surpassed all expectations. About 1.5 million Lebanese gathered in downtown Beirut with the crowds also stretching into the side avenues and streets. As far as the Armenians were concerned, the Ramgavars were there led by MP Kassardjian, students and the faculty of the Tekeyan school, as well as young supporters.⁹² The Huntchags, led by MP Djeredjian and their youth organizations, were there as well as popular delegations from Bourdj Hammoud, Antelias, Jdeyde, Nor Hadjen, Khalil Badawi, and other Armenian-populated quarters.⁹³ It was noted that there were also some Tashnag sympathizers who participated in the rally. The Armenian MPs of Beirut Decision Bloc argued that the presence of 20,000 Armenians in the rally contradicted the view that Armenians always supported or were in favor of the authorities.⁹⁴

While Karame was trying to form a government of national unity in vain, the opposition prepared for the legislative elections. Marwan Hamade met Gen. Aoun in Paris to strike an alliance. Hamade said, "we are waiting for the elections in which Hariri was going to lead the great majority of the opposition, but they tried to stop the election [by killing him]. His death will be the seed of a real *intifada*, through victorious elections enabling the Lebanese to restore their independence".⁹⁵

Events succeeded each other; another opposition rally took place on March 30. MP Fleihan's funeral on April 22 was another occasion of protest. Eventually, by April 26, the Syrian forces had withdrawn from Lebanon.

Further meetings took place. Catholicos Aram I met president Lahoud on March 17, discussed the situation in the country and presented his proposals for solving the pending issues. On the same day the Catholicos met separately in the Catholicosate an opposition delegation and the American Ambassador, Geofry Feltman, and discussed the situation in Lebanon.⁹⁶ The Beirut Decision Bloc Armenian MPs met MP Bahia Hariri on March 19 to discuss the latest developments. On the same day MP Kassardjian stated he had demanded that the Speaker cancel the name of the Armenian Bloc and change it to Tashnag Bloc, as the majority of the Armenian MPs were not in it.⁹⁷ The TPLCC delegation, including minister Hovnanian, met PM Karame on March 21 and stated that they wanted a national unity government.⁹⁸ Hovnanian met President Lahoud on March 22 to discuss the same issue.⁹⁹ An Ain el Tine Meeting delegation met president Lahoud on March 24 and declared they stood by him, appreciating his national stand.¹⁰⁰ On March 25, for the second time in a week an opposition delegation met the Catholicos in Antelias. The

Catholicos said it was necessary to form a new government, frame a new electoral law, and hold elections.¹⁰¹ On that same day Aram I received PM Karame's personal representative, Minister Hovnanian, who wanted to know his views on the formation of the new government. The Catholicos said the elections must be held on the basis of a new electoral law and, if a national unity government was difficult to form, a government should be formed by personalities enjoying the trust of their communities. The new government also should seek "the truth" in the murder of Hariri.¹⁰²

On March 29 the Huntchag Executive Committee received the visit of Beirut Decision Bloc MP Mohammad Kabbani to discuss the recent opposition visit to Europe.¹⁰³

The TPLCC organized a visit by a party delegation, accompanied by representatives of Hamazkayin, Lebanese Armenian Crafts Artisans, and Homenetmen Lebanese District Council to the shrine of Hariri on March 24, where, on behalf of the whole group, Sarkis Giragossian spoke about Hariri. The Homenetmen scouts band accompanied the group.¹⁰⁴ On the same day a TPLCC delegation visited Kraytem and offered condolences on the 40th day of Hariri's death.

In an official communiqué the Ramgavar Azadagan Party Lebanon District Council declared on March 31 that they were in the opposition and demanded a transition government, whose tasks should be the organization of legislative elections and finding the perpetrators of Hariri's assassination in cooperation with an international investigation team.¹⁰⁵

Before Hariri's murder, on December 28, 2004, Gebran Tueni had proclaimed he was an opposition candidate and that Hariri was closer to the opposition than the government.¹⁰⁶ On February 11 former president Amin Gemayel declared his support for his sister-in law, Solange Gemayel, in Beirut III, while Kernet Shahwan Group member Toufic Hindi¹⁰⁷ declared his candidacy for the Minorities seat at the Syriac-Catholic Patriarchate and Ibrahim Kanaan of the Free Patriotic Current¹⁰⁸ supporting Gen. Aoun, declared his candidacy in Northern Metn.¹⁰⁹

Hardly a month had passed since Hariri's assassination when MP Kabbani revealed to the *Afkar* weekly the lists the late Hariri had decided to support in Beirut. The list in Beirut II would have been Hariri, Walid Eido, Ghazi Youssef, Oghassapian, Djeredjian, Kassardjian, Toursarkissian, and Fleihan. He had left the Shiite seats vacant for Hezbollah. In Beirut I Hariri had decided to support Kabbani, Ghinwa Jalloul, Ghazi Aridi and Atef Majdalani. He had not yet decided on the two other Sunnites, but he had decided to leave out Yammout (as the latter had joined the Ain el Tine Meeting) and Adnan Arakji. In Beirut III Hariri had decided to support Pharaon, Ghattas Khoury and de Freij and had reached an understanding with Tueni.¹¹⁰

One of the first candidates was Raffy Madeyan, who had been visiting the Northern Metn villages since the election of 2000. He met the Huntchag Executive Body of Lebanon as the Armenian Orthodox candidate in Metn on March 30, 2005.¹¹¹

Government circles made it known that they would tolerate the ongoing sit-in in Martyr's Square until the 40th day after Hariri's death, and if they could not form a national unity government, the opposition would be held responsible and a government of another nature would be formed.¹¹²

Government circles believed they would win the election, as the opposition had lost a major asset with Hariri's disappearance. The opposition would win only in Mt. Lebanon, but lose in Beirut. Also, they felt, if the elections were postponed, it would favor the government, as the popular anger over Hariri's murder would calm down. Also, the Ain el Tine Meeting would start a counter attack if the opposition did not calm down, by mobilizing its own masses. The opposition thought it would win the election and the new parliament would eventually elect a new president of the republic and form a "genuine national unity" government.¹¹³

The TPLCC, sensing some dissension and questions amongst its followers, decided to organize popular gatherings to interact with the grassroots and explain its policy.¹¹⁴

Tashnag regional committees held club gatherings, where TPLCC members lectured, explaining the party policy. Meetings were held in Arakadz Club, St. Khatch Church hall at Zalka, Karm el Zeitoun, Norashen, Azadamard Club in Ashrafieh, Dikran Dzamhour Club, Ehlan Center in Rawda, Ebrahimian School hall, Nigol Touman Club hall, Aghpalian-Homentmen Center in Fanar, and in Naccashe. The speakers eventually said that in an atmosphere of public outcry they could not take fast decisions, as they felt responsible for the Lebanese Armenian community, and that guarantee of security was their aim. They said they were with legality in order to have a place in the government and to have their voice heard.¹¹⁵

Eventually, a public meeting was held by the Tashnag Party on April 10, 2005 near the Martyr's Statue close to the Bourdj Hammoud Bridge. The speakers were Hagop Pakradouni and the three spiritual leaders of the denominations (Bishop Khatcherian, Bishop Vartan Ashkarian, and Rev. Soghomon Kilaghbian).¹¹⁶

Zartonk criticized the meeting saying it should not have been a partisan meeting and should have assumed a pan-Lebanese Armenian nature. It also criticized the presence of the Armenian Catholic and Armenian Evangelical ecclesiastics.¹¹⁷

On March 31 the Huntchag Party organized a meeting entitled "The political conditions of Lebanon today" with the participation of MPs Djeredjian and Oghassapian at the Sahagian-Megerditchian School hall.¹¹⁸ Another meeting organized by the Ramgavar Azadagan District Council and entitled "Around the ardent questions of today", was held at the Tekeyan Center, on April 17 with the participation of MPs Kassardjian, Oghassapian, and Toursarkissian.¹¹⁹

Both meetings were held with Hariri's picture dominating the center stage, and MPs expressed their support for his line.

The TPLCC sent Mekhitarian and Minister Hovnanian to Paris to meet Gen. Michel Aoun, whom they met on 6 April. This was the first of a number of meetings to discuss the Lebanese situation and possible cooperation.¹²⁰

After PM Karame stepped back from forming the new government, a compromise candidate, Najib Mikati, was appointed. On April 19, on the day he assumed his task, the new government was formed. There was one Armenian Orthodox Minister in the cabinet, Alain Tabourian, whose candidacy was proposed by the Tashnag Party.¹²¹ The government's main task was to organize the legislative elections. PM Mikati announced he would not run for a seat in the parliament and added that the elections were to be held as of May 29, 2005.¹²²

In its ministerial policy platform the government proposed a mixed parliamentary-government committee, in which it would be represented by the Minister of Culture Hassan Sabaa and Minister of Justice Kabbani, to frame within 10 days a new electoral law guaranteeing "genuine political representation". Then the parliament would have to vote a bill with double urgency authorizing the call for elections within 15 days. If the drafted text was not approved, then the government would hold the elections within the constitutional deadlines in conformity with the valid current electoral law (i.e. the law of 2000).¹²³

On April 26 a TPLCC delegation informed president Lahoud it categorically opposed the electoral law of 2000;¹²⁴ so did Gen. Aoun from Paris, the Maronite League, Patriarch Sfeir, the Kernet Shahwan Group, Murr,¹²⁵ Catholicos Aram I,¹²⁶ the Maronite Bishops' Meeting and others. The Kernet Shahwan Group, however said it would participate in the elections with the joint opposition.¹²⁷ On April 29 a TPLCC delegation met opposition leaders Tueni and Harb and stressed their opposition to the law of 2000.¹²⁸

President Lahoud sent a letter to Speaker Berry on May 3 demanding the holding of the election according to the date set by the constitution but under a law that would respect the will of the Lebanese people. He rejected the electoral law No. 171 of 2000.¹²⁹ However, parliament returned the

letter to the president refusing to endorse it. On May 5 the president, along with the PM and the Interior Minister, had no choice but to sign decree No. 14377 calling the electorate to vote. Elections were to be held on May 29 in Beirut and on June 12 in Mt. Lebanon and the Bekaa.¹³⁰

Because of the impossibility of elaborating a new electoral law and in order to respect the constitutional deadlines, the elections were to be held on the basis of the electoral law of 2000.

L'Orient-Le Jour wrote that the law "made in Damascus", intended to reduce Rafik Hariri's stature, was thus maintained.¹³¹

Once the election dates were set, electoral speculations, visits, declarations and public meetings intensified.

Sada Balad wrote that if Saad Hariri allied with Hezbollah, the Tashnag Party and Tamam Salam, he would have two-thirds of the seats in Beirut. The newspaper also alluded to Kernet Shahwan Group members Tueni and Sethrida Geagea, wife of the imprisoned Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea, as possible allies. The newspaper said while an alliance with Hezbollah and Salam was not difficult, it would not be easy to reach an agreement with the Tashnag Party. It would not be easy to abandon Ramgavar and Huntchag party MPs since Hariri had begun his electoral campaign by declaring he would cooperate with these two parties, without the Tashnag Party. *Sada Balad* added that as the Tashnag Party controlled the majority of Armenian voters in Beirut, there would be negotiations and interventions to reach an agreement for the four Armenian seats so that two seats would be given to the Tashnags, one to the Ramgavars and one to the Huntchags. If the situation became difficult, it was possible to grant the Evangelical seat to a candidate proposed by the Tashnags or to an independent Armenian.¹³²

A major event was the return of Gen. Aoun from exile, after 16 years in Paris, on May 7, 2005, once the Lebanese court had annulled the actions taken against him. His intention to participate in the elections created possibilities of new alliances. Thousands of his supporters welcomed him in Martyrs' Square.

The TPLCC led by Hagop Pakradouni visited Aoun on May 8,¹³³ as they had visited Patriarch Sfeir and Mrs. Geagea, stressing their rejection of the electoral law of 2000.¹³⁴ The visit of the American Ambassador, Feltman, on May 10 to this committee was remarkable.¹³⁵

On May 9 the Lebanon Executive Body Chairman of the Huntchag party, Sebouh Kalpakian, and MP Djeredjian met Saad Hariri and reconfirmed their 1996 alliance with the Hariri Bloc. Hariri in response said he would accept Djeredjian¹³⁶ as a sincere ally of his father on his list. The same day a communiqué stated Djeredjian was the party candidate and

would be on Hariri's list along with Kassardjian, Toursarkissian, and Oghassapian.¹³⁷

On May 10 the TPLCC met Saad Hariri at the Kraytem residence. The party expressed its willingness to cooperate in the elections recalling that they had reached some common ground in principle and that without just and rightful representation political life and elections could not be secured. Hariri replied he would follow the line established by his father. *Aztag* added the meeting did not achieve "clear" conclusions.¹³⁸

In its May 12 communiqué, the TPLCC said that it had agreed to meet Saad Hariri and to cooperate with him, and that it would still urge that the candidacies of Stepan Der Bedrossian (Armenian Orthodox) for Beirut II¹³⁹ and former minister Jacques Joukhadarian (Armenian Catholic) for Beirut III be included in the list Hariri would declare. The TPLCC hoped that a decision would not be taken to leave a large section of the Beirut Armenians out of the next parliament and expected that a new electoral law would be elaborated.¹⁴⁰

On May 12 *Aztag* printed *Sada Balad's* article on the Beirut electoral situation. The newspaper said the Armenians were once more marginalized and disregarded as Hariri's list maintained the same Armenian MPs as in the election of 2000. The newspaper said the latter would essentially be elected by Sunnite voters. *Sada Balad* said in case the Tashnag Party allied with Hezbollah, Amal, Jamaa Islamia and other Sunnite leaders, and on condition that the percentage of voters increased among the Shiite and Armenian voters, there could be a contest in Beirut III, as there were about 60,000 Sunnite and Druze versus 69,000 Shiite, Armenian and Minorities voters.¹⁴¹

Zartok announced on May 13 that Kassardjian's candidacy was advocated by the Ramgavar Azadagan District Council of Lebanon and, without waiting for the official proclamation of Saad Hariri's list, which had been postponed from May 12 to May 13, declared that Kassardjian, Oghassapian and Toursarkissian were on Hariri's list.¹⁴²

In its May 14 edition *Zartok* announced that Saad Hariri had announced the lists he would support and printed the pictures and biographies of the Armenian candidates on his list. The newspaper also published the declaration of the Central Council of the Ramgavar Azadagan Party issued in Boston, stating that the Lebanon District Council was the only lawful body of the party in Lebanon and that no other individual or group was authorized to speak in the name of the party. The Party Central Council indicated its full support for Kassardjian.¹⁴³

Hariri, on the very last day, replaced staunch supporter Ghattas Khoury with Solange Gemayel, widow of the murdered former president-elect Beshir Gemayel, to secure the support of the Maronites. He declared his

lists in Verdun's "Beirut Prosperity" Center on May 15. His lists were as follows.¹⁴⁴

Beirut I – Saad Hariri and Ammar Hourri (Sunnites), Michel Pharaon (Greek Catholic), Solange Gemayel (Maronite), Gebran Tueni (Greek Orthodox), Bassem Shab (Protestant).

Beirut II – Walid Eido and Bahige Tabbara (Sunnites), Atef Majdalani (Greek Orthodox), Nabil De Freij (Minorities), Amin Sherri (Shiite), and Yeghia Djeredjian (Armenian Orthodox).

Beirut III – Ghinwa Jalloul, Mohammad Kabbani (Sunnites), Ghazi Aridi (Druze), Ghazi Yousef (Shiite), Hagop Kassardjian, Jean Oghassapian (Armenian Orthodox), and Serge Toursarkissian (Armenian Catholic).

Hariri had allied with Hezbollah by taking on his list in Beirut II its candidate Sherri.

Other candidates had also registered themselves as contestants, like:¹⁴⁵

Beirut I: Jihad Dana, Saadedine Khaled, Fayez Makkouk, Ahmad Dabbagh (Sunnites), Georges Tyan (Maronite), Nicolas Sehnaoui (Greek Catholic), Jacques Tamer, Ralph Eid, Khalil Broummana (Greek Orthodox).

Beirut II: Adnan Arakji, Ahmad Yassine, Nabila Saab, Ibrahim al-Halabi, Zoheir Khatib, Saleh Farroukh, Badr Tabsh (Sunnites), Ibrahim Shammseddine, Ali Shahrour, Salaheddine Osseiran (Shiites), Najah Wakim, Beshara Merhej (Greek Orthodox), Stepan Der Bedrossian, Arthur Matossian (Armenian Orthodox), Raymond Asmar, Isaaf Chaker (Minorities).

Beirut III: Ezzat Koraytem, Adnan Traboulsi, Mohamad al-Daouk, Yahya Ahmad (Sunnites), Jacques Joukhadarian (Armenian Catholic).

Ghazi Youssef and Ghazi Aridi were considered elected as MPs as they had no opponents.

Aztag gave the news of Hariri's list on page one under the title "Saadedine Hariri disregarded the will of the Lebanese Armenians." The Tashnag daily wrote that Hariri disregarded the will of the overwhelming majority of Beirut Armenian voters and remained unyielding. The argument that the MPs would remain the same because of their loyalty, was only applied only to the Armenians. The newspaper said this disregard was astonishing. It created resentment and breached the idea of national unity based on fair community representation.¹⁴⁶

On May 12 a Tashnag Party delegation met with Gen. Aoun. The meeting examined electoral cooperation and rejected the electoral law of 2000.¹⁴⁷

On May 13 the Hamazkayin Cultural and Educational Association, the Lebanese Armenian Assistance Cross and the Homenetmen Sports

Association Lebanon councils also denounced the electoral law of 2000 and demanded the selection of such personalities as represented the Armenian community.¹⁴⁸

The electoral law of 2000 was also criticized by the *Mustaqbal Current*.¹⁴⁹ The Christian political parties, currents and leagues meeting held at Hotel Le Gabriel on May 13 rejected the electoral law of 2000. Among the participants were the Kataeb Party, the Maronite League, the Lebanese National Front Party, the Greek Catholic League, League of Assyrians, Hagop Pakradouni on behalf of the TPLCC and other political personalities.¹⁵⁰

On the same day a TPLCC delegation met Patriarch Sfeir and informed him that the party was against the electoral law of 2000.¹⁵¹ On May 16 the Prelate of the Armenian Orthodox Community met Patriarch Sfeir and stressed the "Unfairness of the electoral law of 2000. He said "due to the marginalization of the Armenians, the Beirut Armenian Community will not participate in the elections."¹⁵²

Indeed, on May 17 *Aztag's* headline read the "Tashnag Party appeals not to vote in the elections to be held in Beirut."¹⁵³ However, at this stage, the party did not withdraw its two candidates. Earlier the party delegations had met PM Mikati after the formation of the Hariri lists and discussed the Beirut elections.¹⁵⁴

On May 18 a TPLCC delegation met the Armenian Catholic patriarch Nerses-Bedros XIX and informed him that they considered the electoral law of 2000 as unfair and had decided not to participate in the Beirut elections.¹⁵⁵

On that same day the Communal Council of the Armenian Orthodox community, presided by Bishop Khacherian, expressed its rejection of the law of 2000 and its worries about the electoral situation.¹⁵⁶

On May 19 *Aztag* announced in big headlines that "the Tashnag Party withdrew its candidates and the elected candidates do not represent the will of Armenians." Similarly independently registered pro-Tashnag candidates Arthur Matossian (Armenian Orthodox in Beirut II) and Haigaz Yardemian (Evangelical in Beirut I) had also withdrawn their candidacies.¹⁵⁷ Thus the Armenian candidates on Hariri's lists were considered elected as they had no opponents. Solange Gemayel, Michel Pharaon and Bassem Shab were also elected by default.

Zartouk gave the news in a low-key manner in its May 19 issue in rather small headlines "Not having competitors, Hagop Kassardjian, Jean Oghassapian, Yeghia Djeredjian and Serge Toursarkissian victorious."¹⁵⁸ On May 16 the Armenian candidates on Hariri's list visited the Huntchag Executive Body,¹⁵⁹ while on May 18 the Ramgavar District Council

received the elected Armenian MPs in the Tekeyan Center. All appealed to the Armenian voters to participate on election day and vote.¹⁶⁰

Beirut II Sunnite candidate Arakji and Beirut III Sunnite candidate Traboulsi visited the Tashnag headquarters requesting their support. The party replied as they had decided to boycott the Beirut elections, they could not in any way support any candidate no matter how friendly they were.¹⁶¹

In response to the Tashnag position, the Huntchag organ replied that in 2000 when the electoral law was voted upon, the Tashnags had voted in favor, while the Hariri bloc had voted against the law. Had their candidates been taken on Hariri's lists, they would not have opposed the 2000 law.¹⁶²

The Ramgavars, in their turn, said the successive electoral laws had never satisfied all sides and Armenian representation also had not satisfied all sides. *Zartouk* reminded readers that in 1972 the Tashnag Party, by taking on its lists Ara Yerevanian and Dr. Antranig Manoukian, had hoped to satisfy the Huntchags and Ramgavars respectively but had failed, as both were subject to the will of the party in the Armenian bloc.¹⁶³ The newspaper further added that those criticizing the law of 2000 had voted in its favor when it was adopted in 2000.¹⁶⁴

The Communist weekly *Gantch* said the Tashnag Party had brought upon itself their dislodging from Hariri's list. The newspaper recalled that in the formation of a recent cabinet, the Tashnag Party had insisted on representing the Armenians and had taken two posts denying the others any representation. Furthermore, the party ministers had stood by president Lahoud, who had opposed Hariri's actions. *Gantch* asked whether the Tashnag Party had forgotten the insulting adjectives used to describe Hariri in one of its electoral rallies in 2000. The Tashnags also had joined the anti-Hariri current (an allusion to the Ain el Tine Meeting), although Hariri was the only Lebanese PM who had visited Armenia and assisted the development of Lebanon-Armenia cooperation. Thus it was not surprising that Saad Hariri remained faithful to his father's orientation and, without giving into pressures, retained the four Beirut Armenian MPs on his list.¹⁶⁵

At this stage Catholicos Aram I went abroad on a pastoral visit. Saad Hariri, accompanied by Serge Toursarkissian, visited the Armenian Catholic Patriarch Nerses-Bedros XIX at the Armenian Catholic patriarchate.¹⁶⁶

On May 19 *Zartouk* headlined "In dense and compact lines, [it is our] exemplary duty to head for the polling booths."¹⁶⁷

As the Beirut elections were a foregone conclusion, the attention of Armenians turned to the Metn and the Bekaa elections. On May 21 the TPLCC announced its candidates: in Metn, Hagop Pakradouni, and in the Bekaa, outgoing MP Georges Kassardji, saying no matter how big the Armenian boycott of the Beirut elections were to be, in Metn and Bekaa it

would be proven who the majority of Armenian voters supported.¹⁶⁸ Kassardji visited the party premises in Anjar on May 22.¹⁶⁹

In the Armenian newspapers, including *Aztag*, the Tashnag candidate was presented as Hagop Pakradouni, as his name had appeared on the ballot lists in the elections of 2000 in Beirut, but in the Arabic, French or English language newspapers his name appeared as Hagop Pakradounian, probably to prevent any confusion with former minister Karim Pakradouni, chief of the Kataeb Party.

In a declaration to Radio Van, operated by the Tashnag Party, Gen. Aoun said in case an alliance was not established with the Tashnag Party in Metn,¹⁷⁰ he would present no candidates for the Armenian seat on his list. Concurrently, he criticized the party for being always on the side of the president of the republic.¹⁷¹ When a TPLCC delegation met him on May 28, he reiterated his position.¹⁷² Hagop Pakradouni, in a declaration on Radio Van, said Gen. Aoun did not approve of the marginalization of the Lebanese Armenians and his stand was favorable to the party. He said Saad Hariri did not comprehend their positive approach, namely a concessional policy and a united entry in the Lebanese parliament. "This incomprehension could not be ascribed to our past faults or presence in the Ain el Tine Meeting." He concluded "all those who are a political force should be represented in the parliament."¹⁷³

Although the Tashnag Party was moving closer to Gen. Aoun, a delegation of the party was present at the inauguration of the statue of Pierre Gemayel, the grandfather of candidate Pierre Gemayel, in Bickfaya. Hagop Pakradouni said the prospect of cooperation between the Tashnag Party and Gemayel in Metn was for them 'very natural and possible.'¹⁷⁴ The presence of Madeyan at the inauguration was also noted.¹⁷⁵ A Tashnag delegation met newly elected MP Solange Gemayel and discussed matters concerning the Metn elections.¹⁷⁶

Two electoral rallies caught the attention of observers.

Popular delegations of 1,200 people, including a large number of Ramgavar, Huntchag, Lebanese Armenian Literary Circle, Ararat Sports Union, Tekeyan, Homenmen, AGBU-AYA, and Alumni of the University of Armenia, gathered at the Koraytem residence of Hariri on May 24, 2005, when Saad Hariri gave a speech and hosted the Armenian candidates of his list on the platform, as well as Madeyan, whom he wished success.¹⁷⁷

The second rally was held by the Tashnag Party on May 27 in the parking lot next to the Shaghzoyan Center, Bourj Hammoud, in the presence of more than 10,000 Armenians. Withdrawn candidates Joukhadarian and Der Bedrossian spoke and appealed for a boycott of the elections in Beirut.¹⁷⁸

In an interview on May 26, on the state TV channel, Hovhanness Taslakian, on behalf of the Tashnag Party, said as far as the Metn elections are concerned, the Tashnag Party shared the views and stands of Gen. Aoun, as well as former president Amin Gemayel and Nassib Lahoud, but the problem was that the latter had taken another Armenian candidate (i.e. Madeyan) on his list. As for the Bekaa elections, it was apparent that the Mustaqbal Current would not cooperate with them, and Elie Skaff, who might support their candidate had not yet declared his desire to cooperate. Taslakian concluded that the party could not accept that others would decide the representatives of the Lebanese Armenians.¹⁷⁹

Meanwhile Gen. Aoun ruled out cooperation with Amin Gemayel and Nassib Lahoud. The TPLCC announced on May 27 that an electoral alliance had been concluded with Murr. A two-member list, Pakradouni and Murr, would be formed, and the doors of cooperation would remain open to all those who wanted true representation of the active forces in Metn.¹⁸⁰

Murr, in a declaration from the Shaghzoyan Center, said cooperation with Gemayel was ruled out. As to Aoun, the possibilities of cooperation existed and a final solution could be reached soon.¹⁸¹

By midnight May 27, once the deadline to register candidates at the Ministry of Interior was over, it became clear that the following Armenians had registered as candidates.¹⁸²

Northern Metn.- Raffy Madeyan, Hagop Pakradouni and Ara Minassian.

Bekaa.- Antoine Nshanagian, Georges Kassardji, Shant Chinchinian and Vartkes Chaparian.

Sada Balad wrote on May 28 there would be three lists in Metn, the first led by Murr, the second headed by Aoun and the third by Amin Gemayel.¹⁸³ However these predictions, perhaps valid on the date they were made, were not realized. Aoun declared on May 31 to LBC the dominant forces in Metn were Murr, Gemayel, Nassib Lahoud, the Armenians and his own Free Patriotic Current. He said he had tried to have a dialogue with the Kernet Shahwan Group, the Mustaqbal Current and Walid Jumblat, but they had tried to marginalize him.¹⁸⁴ He received the Syrian Nationalist Popular Party Chief, Gebran Arayji, and MP Ghassan Moukheiber and discussed electoral issues.¹⁸⁵ On May 30 Aoun received a delegation of the TPLCC and discussed the result of the Beirut elections and the cooperation of both sides in the Metn elections to assure true representation.¹⁸⁶

During an interview on May 30, Hagop Pakradouni remarked that there was a discussion between Amin Gemayel and MP Nassib Lahoud on the question of the Armenian candidate and that the Tashnag Party was

aware of this. He stressed that Amin Gemayel had the support of the party. The Tashnag Party in a communiqué expressed its surprise at Madeyan's candidacy as he had received 6 percent of the Lebanese Armenian votes in Metn in 2000 and a court case had been raised against him, in which doubt was expressed about his Lebanese identity.¹⁸⁷

On May 27 MPs Bahige Tabbara and Kabbani visited Tekeyan Center.¹⁸⁸ On May 28 on the campus of Sagesse in Ashrafieh, an electoral rally took place in the presence of Hariri's list of candidates. Alongside the Armenian candidates, Gemayel, Majdalani, Eido, Tueni and Aridi spoke.¹⁸⁹

On May 28 *Zartok*, under the headline "neither threats, nor pressures will terrify or suppress the will of the Beirut Armenians", said the dignity of Beirut Armenians was hurt by telephone calls and other threats, which included the confiscation of voters' electoral cards in neighborhoods which were under "their" influence. Would it not be better, the *Ramgavar* daily questioned, if the side boycotting the election had called on its supporters to cast their votes, to show their preferences and strength.¹⁹⁰ On May 29 *Zartok* requested its supporters to head for voting centers to attain their "just victory".¹⁹¹

On May 28, *Aztag* published a declaration undersigned by Hamazkayin, Lebanese Armenian Assistance Cross, Homenetmen, 32 Armenian *moukhtars* of 7 districts, 39 Armenian members of municipal councils of 10 districts, the Armenian Black-belt Union, 7 craft unions, 12 student and youth unions and 12 compatriotic unions, calling for the boycott of the elections in Beirut.¹⁹² On that same day, in an interview published in *Aztag*, the Prelate of the Armenian Orthodox community, Bishop Khatcherian, said "we could not stand still when Armenian community rights were disregarded."¹⁹³

The Beirut elections were held on Sunday, May 29, 2000 in a calm atmosphere, except for an incident near Wakim's electoral headquarters. The Tashnag Party, Gen. Aoun's Free Patriotic Current and Jamaa Islamia boycotted the election.

The number of those entitled to vote in Beirut on the lists published by the Ministry of Interior was indicated to be 420,630, divided as follows: Sunnites 181,687, Shiites 57,029, Armenian Orthodox 47,169, Greek Orthodox 42,287, Maronites 24,711, Greek Catholics 18,723, Armenian Catholics 9,682, Syriac Catholics 8,232, Latins 5,822, Jews 5,534¹⁹⁴, Syriac Orthodox 5,246, Druzes 5,073, Armenian Protestants 8,720, Arab Protestants 3,190, Chaldean Catholics 1,364, Assyrians 387, Chaldeans 229, Alawites 215, Adventists 177, Chaldean Orthodox 111, Baha'i 33, various 9.¹⁹⁵

Beirut I counted 135,899 voters (Ashrafieh 51,993, Mazraa 74,340, Saifi 9,566) and 257 electoral centers.

Beirut II counted 137,466 voters (Mouseitbeh 45,262, Bashoura 4,526, Rmeil 29,072), 250 electoral centers.

Beirut III counted 147,265 voters (Ain el Mreise 10,621, Ras Beirut 30,062, Zokak el Blat 42,663, Moudawar 41,789, Marfa 8,664, Minet el Hosn 13,466) and 273 electoral centers.¹⁹⁶

The official results were as follows:-¹⁹⁷

Beirut I, out of 135,667 registered voters 42,801 voted. Of these 731 votes were annulled. Participation rate was 31%.

Sunnites:	Saad Hariri 36,499
	Ammar Hourri 30,741
	Ahmad Dabbagh 7,218
	Jihad Dana 273
Greek Orthodox:	Gebran Tueni 30,591
	Khalil Broummana 6,582
	Jacques Tamer 23

Beirut II, out of 141,005 registered voters 42,222 voted. Of these 844 votes were annulled. Participation rate was 29.6%.

Sunnites:	Bahige Tabbara 27,981
	Walid Eido 25,123
	Adnan Arakji 7,379
	Badr Tabsh 6,128
	Ibrahim Halabi 3,614
	Zouheir Khatib 1,084
	Nabila Saab 110
	Ahmad Yassine 28
Shiites:	Amine Sherri 31,859
	Ibrahim Shamseddine 4,178
	Ali Shahrour 491
	Salaheddine Osseiran 45
Greek Orthodox:	Atef Majdalani 26,123
	Najah Wakim 14,231
Minorities:	Nabil de Freige 27,366
	Raymond Asmar 6,212

Beirut III, out of 146,956 registered voters, 31,537 voted. Of these 1,382 votes were annulled. Participation rate was 20%.

Sunnites:	Mohammad Kabbani 24,577
	Ghinwa Jalloul 23,731
	Adnan Traboulsi 5,448
	Yahya Ahmad 1,765

According to the Ministry of Interior the average participation rate had been 28% in Beirut's three electoral districts.¹⁹⁸

Beirut I – Ashrafieh 17%, Saifi 17%, Mazraa 44%

Beirut II – Bashoura 35%, Rmeil 11%, Mousseitbeh 37%

Beirut III – Marfa and Medawar each 10%, Ain el Mreise 34%, Ras Beirut 34%, Zokak el Blat 24%, Minet el Hosn 14%.

Observers indicated that in the quarters where Moslems outnumbered Christians, the turnout was higher. Elected MPs Solange Gemayel and Michel Pharaon said the fact that 9 candidates were considered elected before the elections and that there were no contests for their seats had had an impact on voters and their participation had been low.¹⁹⁹

Aztag gave a comparison of the Beirut electoral district votes in 2000 and 2005.²⁰⁰

Districts	2000	2005
Beirut I	40%	32%
Beirut II	35%	31%
Beirut III	32%	21%

Aztag wrote that there were only 1,950 Armenian voters in 2005 down from the 13,600 in 2000.²⁰¹ The percentage of Armenian voters was 3.2%. In the Ashrafieh district it did not reach 5%.²⁰²

The headlines of the Armenian political newspapers the day after the elections reflected their stands.

Zartok wrote "in the elections of the capital, the list of the "Martyr Rafik Hariri" registers an unprecedented and exceptional success." The paper put on its first page a picture of the whole list with the wife of the late Hariri, Nazik Hariri.²⁰³

Aztag wrote "the Beirut Armenians once more gave their vote of confidence to the Tashnag Party. In 2000, there were 13,600 Armenian voters, in contrast to yesterday's 1,950 Armenian voters. The boycott was well observed; the participation of Armenians was 3.2%."²⁰⁴

L'Orient-Le Jour in its turn headlined "Les listes Hariri, comme une lettre a la poste."²⁰⁵

Zartok wrote that 9 candidates, including the four Armenian candidates, having no competitors were considered elected; the remaining 10 candidates were all elected by large majorities, which indicated the popularity of the Hariri list. The Ramgavar daily admitted that the average rate of participation in Beirut was 28%, compared to 33% in 2000.²⁰⁶

Zartok complained that there was a tense atmosphere in the Armenian quarters where Armenian voters were overtly threatened "you are not

Armenians; those who vote are traitors" and were sworn at.²⁰⁷ Independent reports indicated that photographs were taken of Armenians who entered the polling centers,²⁰⁸ while Tashnag partisans distributed pamphlets calling for the boycott of the elections.

The UN representative responsible for the application of UNSC Resolution 1559, Terje Roed-Larsen, congratulated the Lebanese for the first stage of the elections, held in "a positive and constructive atmosphere."²⁰⁹ The next day the Secretary General of the UN, Kofi Annan, declared that "the elections would help Lebanon regain its sovereignty."²¹⁰ The European observers announced the electoral process had been "open and transparent."²¹¹

On 29 May Gen. Aoun's son-in-law, Gebrane Basil, himself a candidate in Batroun (North Lebanon), reaffirmed that there would be no alliance in Metn between the Aounist Current and Murr as such a meeting was "impossible."²¹²

Gen. Aoun criticized the Beirut elections. He had boycotted the elections in the capital and declared the low turnout was due to frustration or indifference. He claimed the Mustaqbal Current had failed in the election and if the emotional factor (i.e. Hariri's murder) had not existed for moving the people to vote, the participation rate would have been lower. Gen. Aoun added that he was against the marginalization of real political forces and sides and that true representation of the people should be secured.²¹³

Gen. Aoun's stand gave hope of securing a strong ally, along with Murr, to the Tashnag Party. On May 30 a delegation of the TPLCC met Gen. Aoun in Rabieh. Both sides examined the Beirut results and reconfirmed Tashnag-Aoun electoral cooperation. Later on, Gen. Aoun declared that 0.5% of the Armenians of Lebanon had voted.²¹⁴ However, no steps were taken yet to include the Tashnag candidate on his Northern Metn list or conclude an electoral alliance with the Tashnag Party.

On June 2 Gen. Aoun declared his list.- Gen. Edgar Maalouf, Ghassan Moukheiber, Ibrahim Kanaan, Salim Salhab and Nabil Nicola. The list was incomplete and did not include any Armenian Orthodox candidate, nor a second Greek Orthodox candidate or a fourth Maronite.²¹⁵

Nassib Lahoud declared he had had negotiations with Gen. Aoun. They had proposed forming a list of 6 candidates, on condition that he formed a list of 2 candidates, but as Aoun had refused the proposal, they had formed a complete list.²¹⁶

The opposition's complete list in Northern Metn was announced by the leader of the Democratic Renewal, Nassib Lahoud. It was composed of himself, Pierre Gemayel, Gabriel Murr, Nabih Hajj, Michel Akl, Eddie Abillamah, Raffy Madeyan and Philippe Maalouf. Lahoud and Madeyan

were from the Democratic Renewal, Gemayel and Hajj were with former president Amin Gemayel, Abillamah was from the Lebanese Forces, while Maalouf was from the National Liberal Party.²¹⁷

Zartouk said the Ramgavar Azadagan Party supported Medeyan's candidacy.²¹⁸

The complete list formed by Nassib Lahoud created a new situation. Some of Gen. Aoun's candidates in Metn and Baabda-Aley visited the Tashnag headquarters on June 6. Salhab declared that in the Metn elections they would support the Tashnag candidate, and the Central Committee of the party informed them they would, in their turn, support Aoun's candidates.²¹⁹ On June 7 Aoun announced on state TV that he would ally with the Tashnag Party, which was marginalized in Beirut; he was against eliminating this force from political life.²²⁰

Meanwhile Tashnag candidate Pakradouni visited Metn villages, met residents and explained his party's position and alliance.²²¹ On June 7 in Zalka, Pakradouni together with Salhab answered the questions of the residents, while in Mayasa, Gen. Edgar Maalouf announced that Pakradouni had been added to their five-member list.²²²

On June 3, Aoun accused his opponents of allying with the symbols of the pro-Syrian regime. He cited the agreements of Bahia Hariri with Amal in Saida and Jumblat with Hezbollah in Aley-Baabda. He declared Nabih Berry, Rafik Hariri and Walid Jumblat were symbols of the "security state".²²³ On June 3 he had denied any electoral agreement with Michel Murr, but defended Talal Arslan, both considered to be in the pro-Syrian camp. Within days he allied with Arslan and Michel Murr.²²⁴

On June 8 a TPLCC delegation met Gen. Aoun in his Rabieh residence. Pakradouni declared the Tashnag-Aoun Alliance was final for all electoral districts in Mt. Lebanon and Northern Lebanon. He said the party was allied with Michel Murr and Gen. Aoun and was trying hard to bring them together.²²⁵ On June 8 Gen. Aoun declared on Lebanese state TV that he had taken Michel Murr on his list, leaving only one vacant Maronite seat.²²⁶ The next day Pakradouni declared the TPLCC alliance with Aoun was not an electoral alliance only but the result of political convictions.²²⁷ On June 10 Gen. Aoun declared that he did not have any alliance with the Syrian Popular Party.²²⁸

The Tashnag Party called for an electoral rally in the parking lot near Shaghzoyan Center for June 10, 2005. *Aztag* claimed 20,000 were present. Pakradouni, Michel Murr, Nicola and Gen. Aoun's representative Michel de Chadarevian spoke. The slogan used was "victory belongs to these people." During the meeting Michel Murr presented his apologies for any mistreatment of Aoun's followers in the past.²²⁹

As the Metn campaign was going ahead and electoral alliances were being made, the Zahle elections also interested the Armenian parties, as an Armenian Orthodox seat was contested there. The incumbent MP, Georges Kassardji, and the Tashnag Party were close to Elie Skaff, while the Mustaqbal Bloc chose Dr. Antoine Neshanagian to be their Armenian candidate.

In the Bekaa electoral district Mohsen Dalloul and Toufic Hindi visited the Anjar Tashnag club on May 27²³⁰, followed by Elie Skaff on May 28.²³¹ Skaff blamed Dalloul for the failure of negotiations with the Mustaqbal Current. He accused Dalloul of fighting for the speakership of the parliament through Zahle, rather than for normal legislative elections. Skaff added he intended to run with a complete list.²³²

On June 2 *Zartouk* headlined its front page "the candidacy of Dr. Antoine Neshanagian is adopted by the Ramgavar Azadagan Party, proposed by the Mustaqbal Current for the Armenian Orthodox seat in Zahle." The newspaper printed a picture and biography of Neshanagian. The latter was born in 1943, graduated as a medical doctor from St. Joseph University, worked in "Hopital Pitie Salpetriere" in France and in 1981 received a permit to perform brain and nerve surgeries. With the title of professor, he had returned to Lebanon and worked in Batroun Hospital in Jbayl, St. Peter and Paul Hospital in Metn and the Greek Orthodox Hospital in Beirut. He was also a lecturer at Balamand University and the author of a number of medical publications.²³³ In the Elections of 2000, he had been a candidate in Beirut II but had withdrawn in favor of the Tashnag-led Armenian Unity Front. However, in the elections of 1996 as an individual and independent candidate running for the Armenian seat in Zahle, he had obtained 22,054 votes against the incumbent Tashnag candidate Georges Kassardji's 57,981 votes.

On 6 June Nicola Fattoush (Greek Catholic) announced his list composed of himself, Mohsen Dalloul (Shiite), Yousef Maalouf (Greek Orthodox), Khaled Sarout (Sunnite), Elie Maroni (Maronite) and Antoine Neshanagian (Armenian Orthodox). This list included Mustaqbal Current, Lebanese Forces and Kataeb's Reform Movement candidates. It had one Greek Catholic seat vacant st.²³⁴

Soon after, on June 7, Elie Skaff (Greek Catholic) announced his list composed of himself, Fuad Turk (Greek Catholic), Salim Aoun (Maronite), Camille Maalouf (Greek Orthodox), Hassan Yaacoub (Shiite), Assem Araj (Sunnite) and Georges Kassardji (Armenian Orthodox). This list included Tashnag's and Aoun Current's candidates.²³⁵ There were also independent candidates such as Khalil Heraoui.

On June 9, in a public rally in Anjar for the list of Skaff, supported by Aoun's Current and the Tashnag Party, Skaff and Kassardji spoke.²³⁶

There were 140,069 voters on the electoral list of registered voters in the Zahle constituency (60% Christian and 40% Moslem). *L'Orient-Le Jour* noted a great battle for Zahle was going to take place.²³⁷

Zartok campaigned for both Madeyan and Dr. Neshanagian, publishing their colored pictures daily on the last page of the newspaper. On June 3 a declaration was published by the Lebanon District Council of the Ramgavar Azadagan Party appealing to party members and sympathizers to vote for both.²³⁸ On June 9 *Zartok* wrote "Armenian electors can freely and resolutely vote for our candidate (Madeyan)."²³⁹ *Zartok* also echoed the public meetings of the Mustaqbal list of Zahle. The newspaper headlined "opposition's Armenian candidates enjoy significant solidarity".²⁴⁰ The newspaper indicated the Ramgavar District Council and MP Kassardjian attended one of the Zahle rallies.

Aztag mentioned the Tashnag Party candidate had met the Syriac Orthodox Prelate of Metn, George Saliba, along with Michel Murr, and the bishop had asked his flock to vote for them. The Lebanese Assyrian, Chaldean and Syriac Union declared its support for Pakradouni.²⁴¹

Ararad announced that on June 6 both Neshanagian and Madeyan separately visited the Huntchag Executive Body of Lebanon. In both meetings MP Djeredjian was also present. The party recommended that sympathizers vote for both of them.²⁴²

Gantch published the appeal of Madeyan to the Northern Metn populace along with his picture on its first page. In the appeal Madeyan said he had demanded the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon and a stop to their interference in Lebanon's internal affairs, the release of Samir Geagea from prison, and the return of Gen. Aoun from exile. He had supported the MTV station, had stood by the young men arrested on August 7, and had been with the March 14 demonstration. He spoke against the Murr-Tashnag alliance but said he had no enmity towards the Tashnag Party due to the campaign they had carried on, nor towards the people who were subject to them. He said he opposed a political orientation imposed on the Armenian community but wanted a real and total concord of Armenians.²⁴³

There was also a problem of polling centers. *Aztag* disclosed the annoyance of the Tashnag Party at the changing of the location of polling centers at the request of the opposition.²⁴⁴ However, on June 8 Pakradouni declared the Ministry of Interior had decided not to change the original places, canceling its plan of change.²⁴⁵

The elections in Metn and Bekaa were held on Sunday, June 12, 2005. A fierce electoral battle took place, but without troubles. MP Skaff accused his opponents of buying votes at prices varying from \$100 to \$500. Some of his followers inquired "what was Hariri (i.e. the Mustaqbal Current)

doing in Zahle?" Nicola Fattoush replied "they had no lessons to learn from their opponents who have been masters at buying votes for the last 70 years."²⁴⁶ *L'Orient-Le Jour* indicated that at the very last minute, with convincing arguments, candidate Pierre Gemayel could earn the favor of Tashnags in the Metn area.²⁴⁷

The official results were as follows:²⁴⁸ In Northern Metn, out of 163,069 eligible voters 83,502 had voted in 348 voting centers. Participation rate was 50.9%, while 500 votes were annulled.

Ghassan Moukheiber (Greek Orthodox)	56,906
Ibrahim Kanaan (Maronite)	56,840
Edgar Maalouf (Greek Catholic)	55,017
Selim Salhab (Maronite)	54,776
Hagop Pakradouni (Armenian Orthodox)	53,272
Nabil Nicola (Maronite)	48,872
Michel Murr (Greek Orthodox)	48,662
Pierre Gemayel (Maronite)	29,421
Gabriel Murr (Greek Orthodox)	28,973
Nassib Lahoud (Maronite)	27,565
Raffy Madeyan (Armenian Orthodox)	25,043
Eddy Abillama (Maronite)	24,217
Sarkis Sarkis (Maronite)	22,304
Wadih Hajj (Maronite)	21,409
Philippe Maalouf (Greek Catholic)	20,115
Michel Akl (Greek Orthodox)	19,683
Ghassan Achkar (Maronite)	15,782

Members of Aoun's list Moukheiber, Kanaan, Edgar Maalouf, Salhab, Pakradouni, Nicola, Michel Murr and, from the opposing list, Gemayel were elected MPs.

In Bekaa II Zahle, out of 141,226 eligible voters 69,488 voted, in 264 polling centers with a participation rate of 48.85%. 489 votes were annulled.

Elie Skaff (Greek Catholic)	38,035
Selim Aoun (Maronite)	36,408
Georges Kassardji (Armenian Orthodox)	35,065
Hassan Yaacoub (Shiite)	31,418
Assem Araji (Sunnite)	31,418
Nicola Fattoush (Greek Catholic)	31,111
Camille Maalouf (Greek Orthodox)	31,108
Yousef Maalouf (Greek Orthodox)	29,089
Mohsen Dalloul (Shiite)	28,975
Fuad Turk (Greek Catholic)	28,827
Antoine Neshanagian (Armenian Orthodox)	26,900

Khaled Sarout (Sunnite) 26,378
Elie Maroni (Maronite) 22,094
Tony Abou Khater (Greek Catholic) 10,807
Khalil Heraoui (Maronite) 3,257
Shant Mardiros Chinchinian (Armenian Orthodox) 601
Vartkes Chaparian (Armenian Orthodox) 379

Skaff's list members, with the exception of Turk, were elected, and from the opposing list Fattoush was elected.

Aztag triumphantly announced "by showering thousands of votes in Metn and Bekaa, the Lebanese Armenians imposed their will. Tashnag Party candidates Hagop Pakradouni and Georges Kassardji elected."²⁴⁹

The Tashnag daily announced in Metn out of 10,800 Armenians 92% had voted for Pakradouni and 8% for Madeyan. In the Bekaa out of 2,500 Armenians 93% had voted for Kassardji and 7% for Neshanagian.²⁵⁰ Later on a Tashnag publication indicated Pakradouni had received 9,961 votes in Bourj-Hammoud.²⁵¹

A victory festival was organized on June 16 by the TPLCC in Bourj Hammoud. Both newly elected MPs spoke.²⁵²

After the elections of Beirut, Metn and Zahle the elected Armenian MPs received congratulations. Kassardjian received the visits of Bishop Vartan Ashkarian, Armenian Evangelical Communal Council chairman Hrair Djebedjian, Mustaqbal Current representative Mohamad Shehab, Popular Reform Movement representative Wafic Zantout, former MP Beshara Merhej, Kurdish Razkari Party president Yahya Khedr Ahmad, Jamiyet Wafa Ijtimaiyeh's Sheikh Bilal Safieddine, AGBU and AYA representatives.²⁵³

Pakradouni paid visits to Catholicos Aram I, Patriarch Nerses Bedros XIX and Bishop Ashkarian, Bishop Khatcherian, Rev. Mgrdich Karageuzian and Rev. Soghomon Kilaghbian, former MPs Tabourian, Eblighatian, Barsoumian, Joukhadarian, Dedeyan, Hagop Demirdjian and Dr. Nouridjan Demirdjian and former minister Nazarian.²⁵⁴ Pakradouni and Kassardji received congratulatory visits in the Sardarabad Club on June 16.²⁵⁵

Patriarch Nerses Bedros XIX hosted the Armenian MPs Kassardjian, Djeredjian, Oghassapian and Toursarkissian and congratulated them in the Bzoummar Armenian Catholic convent on July 7. Soon after, MPs Pakradouni and Kassardji joined the group and were the patriarch's guests for lunch. Joint pictures of the group were taken.²⁵⁶ *Zartouk* and *Ararad* published them, while *Aztag* did not publish the news of the joint visit. It was noted that after the election results were announced, *Aztag* ignored the Armenian MPs elected on Hariri's list, eliminating their names from communiqués and newspaper reports in instances where their names were

mentioned among personalities present in official meetings, celebrations or other activities.

Recriminations started right after the elections and continued till mid-summer.

The *Huntchag* daily said the elections had had political depth. The Lebanese Armenians had made their choice. The *Huntchag* and *Ramgavar* parties, as well as a large number of individuals reconfirmed their years-old cooperation with the martyr Rafik Hariri and supported Saad Hariri's list. But instead of accepting their fate the Tashnag Party once more came forth as "the master and protector" of Armenians and their "only representatives". The newspaper then questioned who had allowed them to speak in the name of all Armenians. The *Huntchag* organ blamed the Tashnags for identifying themselves with all the Armenians, and questioned who had allowed them to be the defender of the rights and interests of the Armenian community. The editor, Aharon Shekherdeman, then blamed the Tashnags for their past cooperation with the Turkish Party of Committee of Union and Progress in 1909, with Nazi Germany during World War II, and for the role of Tro and his followers in the post-war period, particularly in Syria. The editor concluded the Tashnags had put party interests above national interests.²⁵⁷

On June 27, 2005 Catholicos Aram I issued a written declaration, stating that Lebanon had entered a new phase after the legislative elections and he wanted to stress the following points:²⁵⁸

First, a new electoral law must be prepared, as the electoral law of 2000 was opposed by him in 2000.

Second, Armenians should be open to all political currents and defend their community's rights and not be self-centered.

Third, the integrity of the Armenian community must be preserved.

(a) As Lebanon has a confessional system, the Prelate of the Armenian Orthodox Community and the communal authorities had expressed their views in order to keep the inner unity of the community, so no one had the right to interpret matters differently and make comments that were out of place.

(b) In the period before the elections and later, when he was in Iran, the Catholicos had advised "our political leaders" to avoid comments which would create provocation.

The elected MPs of the Armenian community are in different electoral and political groups. This must be used for the defense of the Armenian community's rights and to emphasize the pan-Lebanese political role of the Armenians.

The Catholicos suggested, first, to strengthen the community bodies, and to reorganize them. Second, each political organization must analyze

the situation in Lebanon and re-evaluate its role and the community's role. Third, the three political parties must jointly examine and discuss the role of the Armenian community in the new situation in Lebanon. Fourth, all the MPs and ministers of the Armenian community must create a permanent body for consultations and cooperation. Fifth all the Armenian unions, organizations, intellectuals, community and political leaders, youth and people at large should work to strengthen the ability of the Lebanese Armenians and to defend their rights.

Despite the Catholicos's advice, there were further recriminations when the new government was about to be formed.

President Lahoud entrusted Fouad Siniora the task of forming the new government, after consultations with the newly elected MPs and parliamentary blocs, the majority of whom had indicated their preference for him. MP Oghassapian was included in the 24-member cabinet as Minister of Administrative Reform. Minister Oghassapian made visits to the Ramgavar Azadagan and Huntchag Party headquarters.²⁵⁹

The Civil Council of the Armenian Orthodox Community, under the presidency of Prelate Bishop Khatcherian, complained in a communiqué sent to the Lebanese media that the new minister did not represent the Armenian majority and that the government was a body which did not have total popular legitimacy.²⁶⁰ Barouyr Aghbashian, in *Zartonk*, strongly criticized this approach and added the six elected Armenian MPs, each belonging to a different side, represented the Lebanese Armenians and served the Lebanese fatherland and the Armenian community.²⁶¹

Finally, MP Kassardjian in his speech in Parliament during the debates for the vote of confidence in the government, alluded to the above. He said it was wrong to say the Armenian community was not represented in the Parliament and the government. He asked who Minister Oghassapian was, and who the Mustaqbal Current Armenian MPs were. "Are we not Armenians and don't we represent the Lebanese in general and the Armenians in particular?" He added he was a Lebanese of Armenian descent and belonged to the Ramgavar Azadagan Party; Djeredjian belonged to the Huntchag Party; while Oghassapian and Toursarkissian were independents in the Armenian community. He questioned whether the Mustaqbal Current allies, the Ramgavar and Huntchag parties, were not Armenians, but Turks? He said he was surprised there was a bloc in the parliament which called itself the Armenian bloc, as if there were Maronite, Shiite, Catholic or Sunnite blocs. If a party wants a bloc, it should have a political name like Tashnag, Ramgavar or Huntchag, like the other blocs in the parliament.²⁶²

The newly elected parliament decreed that the Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea be freed from prison. Also on August 16, by 56 votes for

(including those of all the Armenian MPs), 10 against and 23 abstentions, former MP and Minister Shahe Barsoumian was cleared of all charges against him. The MTV station of Gabriel Murr was authorized to resume functioning²⁶³, but it did not reopen due to financial difficulties.

The Tashnag Party formed a political council of the Armenian MPs Bloc in November 2005. It included MPs Pakradouni and Kassardji, former MPs Andre Tabourian, Joukhadarian, Barsoumian, Hovnanian, Dr. Demirdjian and Dedeyan, former ministers Nazarian and Alain Tabourian.²⁶⁴ Former MPs Souren Khanamirian and Hagop Demirdjian were not in the newly formed Council.

On March 1, 2006, a meeting was held in the Shaghzoyan Center, between the three Armenian political parties. It was decided that the Armenian MPs belonging to three parties, Pakradouni, Kassardjian and Djeredjian, would represent the Lebanese Armenians in the National Dialogue parliamentary conference organized by Speaker Nabih Berry on March 2, 2006.²⁶⁵ At each meeting, in turn, the three Armenian MPs sat at a round table along with the major leaders of Lebanese parties and participated in the proceedings.

ENDNOTES

¹ This study is the ninth in a series of articles by the author on Armenian participation in successive Lebanese legislative elections since 1934. The first eight articles in this series were published in volumes 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28 and 29 of the *Haigazian Armenological Review*.

² *Zartouk*, 66th year, # 177 (18750), 26 August 2003.

³ *Monday Morning*, 27 October 2003.

⁴ *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 7-8 June 2008, p. 2.

⁵ *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 30 April 2004, p. 2.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Aztag*, 77th year, # 51 (21684), 8 May 2004.

⁹ *Zartouk*, 67th year, # 94 (18946) 5 May 2004.

¹⁰ *Ararad*, 67th year, # 19 (17326), 30 April-6 May 2004.

¹¹ *Zartouk*, 67th year # 100 (18952), 13 May 2004.

¹² *Aztag*, 77th year # 56 (21689), 14 May 2004.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 77th year # 58 (21691), 17 May 2004.

¹⁴ *Tidag* monthly, Beirut # 26, 31 December 2004.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ According to *Zartouk*, 67th year, # 267 (19119) 30 November 2004, among those who were present were MPs Ghazi Aridi, Nassib Lahoud, Michel Pharaon, Ghattas Khoury, Atef Majdalani, Nabil de Freige, Ghassan Moukheiber, Adnan Arakji, Basil Fleihan, Nicola Fattoush, Beshara Merhej, Robert Ghanem, Nabil Boustani, Ghinwa Jalloul, Bassam Yamout, Bahige Tabbara, Baha Hariri and among the personalities Garbis Markarian, Garbis Dantziguian, Husein Yetim, Antoine Iklimos, Mohamad Baalbaki, Ernest Karam, Emile Rahme and Ara Sisserian.

- ¹⁷ *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 31 December 2004, p. 2.
- ¹⁸ *Ararad*, 67th year, # 43 (17350), 22-28 October 2004.
- ¹⁹ Information given to the present writer by Bebo Simonian, member of the Central Council of the Huntchag Party.
- ²⁰ *Aztag*, 76th year, # 234 (21576), 17 December 2003.
- ²¹ *Zartok*, 66th year, # 250 (18823), 19 December 2003; *Ibid*, 67th year, # 192 (19044), 29 August 2004.
- ²² *Aztag*, 77th year, # 146 (21779), 30 August 2004.
- ²³ *Nor Serounti Tzain* (Voice of the New Generation), London, November-December 2004, p. 3.
- ²⁴ *Safir* daily, Beirut, 9 January 2004.
- ²⁵ *Gantch* weekly, Beirut, # 603, 17 January 2004.
- ²⁶ MP Serge Toursarkissian informed the public in a meeting at the Tekeyan Center on 17 April 2005, that the Syrian intelligence officer Ghazali forced the MPs to vote for the amendment.
- ²⁷ *Aztag*, 77th year, # 196 (21829), 27 October 2006.
- ²⁸ *Ibid*, 77th year, # 220 (21853), 29 November 2006.
- ²⁹ *Ibid*, 77th year, # 222 (21855), 1 December 2006.
- ³⁰ *L'Orient-Le Jour* # 11246, 18 December 2004, p. 2.
- ³¹ *Aztag*, 77th year, # 221 (21854), 30 November 2006.
- ³² *Ibid*, 77th year, # 224 (21857) 3 December 2006.
- ³³ *Ibid*, 77th year # 227 (21860), 7 December 2004.
- ³⁴ *Zartok*, 66th year # 281 (19133), 17 December 2004.
- ³⁵ *Aztag*, 77th year # 273 (21906), 3 February 2005.
- ³⁶ Nada Raad, "Dividing Beirut in 3 will Clip Hariri's Wings," *The Daily Star*, Beirut, 19 January 2005.
- ³⁷ *The Daily Star*, 25 January 2005.
- ³⁸ *Ibid*.
- ³⁹ *Ibid*, 27 January 2005, p. 3.
- ⁴⁰ *L'Orient- Le Jour* # 11278, 29 January 2005, p. 2.
- ⁴¹ *Aztag*, 77th year, # 249 (21882), 5 January 2005.
- ⁴² *Ibid*, 77th year, # 274 (21907) 5 February 2005 and 77th year, # 282 (21915), 12 February 2005.
- ⁴³ *Ibid* 77th year, # 254 (21187), 12 January 2005.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid* 77th year, # 280 (21913), 12 February 2005.
- ⁴⁵ *Zartok*, 67th year, # 17 (19160), 1 February 2005.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid*.
- ⁴⁷ Walid Choucair, "Spotlight: Franjeh Accuses Hariri of being a 'Sectarian'", *The Daily Star*, 29 January 2005.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid*.
- ⁴⁹ Issa Goraieb "Vocalises", *L'Orient-Le Jour* #11284, 5-6 February 2005.
- ⁵⁰ *Aztag*, 77th year, # 271(21904), 1 February 2005.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid*, 77th year, # 274 (21907), 5 February 2005.
- ⁵² *Ibid*.
- ⁵³ *Ibid*, 77th year, # 275 (21908), 7 February 2005.
- ⁵⁴ Article 63 limited electoral expenses at 150,000,000 LL.
- ⁵⁵ *Aztag*, 77th year, # 279(21912), 11 February 2005.
- ⁵⁶ It was rumored that the dissident, expelled former Huntchag leader and candidate in 2000, Mihran Seferian, and Ramgavar Azadagan dissident Nar Khatchadourian had attended the meeting.

- ⁵⁷ *Gantch* weekly, # 656, 12 February 2005.
- ⁵⁸ *Aztag*, 77th year, # 281 (21914), 14 February 2005.
- ⁵⁹ *L'Orient-Le Jour*, # 11290, 15 February 2005.
- ⁶⁰ *Aztag*, 77th year, # 282 (21915), 15 February 2005; *Zartok*, 68th year, #29 (19172), 16 February 2005.
- ⁶¹ The Prelate of the Armenian Orthodox Community and all the three Armenian political parties delegations participated in the funeral. Catholicos Aram I visited the Hariri residence on March 2, 2005 and offered his condolences.
- ⁶² *Aztag*, 77th year, # 285 (21918), February 18, 2005.
- ⁶³ *L'Orient-Le Jour*, # 11304, 1 March 2005.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid*, # 11309, 6 March 2005.
- ⁶⁵ *Aztag*, 77th year, #287 (21920), 21 February 2005; *Aztag Amsater!* (monthly), # 22 February 2005, p. 25.
- ⁶⁶ *Ararad*, 68th year, # 9 (17368), 25 February/3 March 2005; *Zartok*, 68th year, # 34 (19177), 22 February 2005.
- ⁶⁷ *Aztag* 77th year, # 295 (21928), 3 March 2005; *Ararad* 68th year, # 10 (17369), 4-10 March 2005; *Zartok*, 68th year, # 44 (19187), 5 March 2005; *Aztag* gave a detailed communiqué, while *Zartok* and *Ararad* gave brief information.
- ⁶⁸ *Aztag*, 77th year, # 296 (21929), 4 March 2005.
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid*.
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 78th year, # 2 (21930), 5 March 2005.
- ⁷¹ Hratch Varjabedian, "To Be With One Doesn't Mean to Be Against the Other," *Aztag*, 78th year, 8 March 2005, No 3 (21932).
- ⁷² *Aztag*, 78th year, # 1 (21931), 7 March 2005.
- ⁷³ *Ibid*, 78th year, # 3 (21932), 8 March 2005.
- ⁷⁴ *Ibid*.
- ⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 78th year, # 4 (21933), 9 March 2005.
- ⁷⁶ *Ibid*.
- ⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 78th year, # 5 (21934), 10 March 2005.
- ⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 78th year, # 6 (21935), 11 March 2005.
- ⁷⁹ *Ibid*.
- ⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 78th year, # 7 (21936), 12 March 2005.
- ⁸¹ *Ibid*.
- ⁸² *Ibid*, 78th year, # 4 (21933), 9 March 2005.
- ⁸³ *Ibid*.
- ⁸⁴ *Zartok*, 68th year, # 49 (19192), 10 March 2005.
- ⁸⁵ *Ararad*, 86th year, # 12 (17371), 18-25 March 2005.
- ⁸⁶ *Zartok*, 68th year, # 49 (19192), 10 March 2005.
- ⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 68th year, # 51 (19194), 12 March 2005.
- ⁸⁸ *Ararad*, 68th year, # 11 (17370), 11-17 March 2005.
- ⁸⁹ *Aztag*, 78th year, # 7 (21936), 12 March 2005, p. 2.
- ⁹⁰ *Ibid*.
- ⁹¹ *Ararad*, 68th year, # 11 (17370), 11-17 March 2005.
- ⁹² *Zartok*, 68th year, # 52 (19195), 15 March 2005.
- ⁹³ *Ararad*, 68th year, # 12 (17371), 18-25 March 2005.
- ⁹⁴ *Zartok*, 68th year, # 56 (19119), 20 March 2005.
- ⁹⁵ *L'Orient-Le Jour*, # 11314, 12 March 2005, p. 2.
- ⁹⁶ *Zartok*, 68th year, # 55 (19198), 19 March 2005.
- ⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 86th year, # 56 (19199), 20 March 2005.
- ⁹⁸ *Aztag*, 78th year, # 15 (21944), 22 March 2005.

- ⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 78th year, # 16 (21945), 23 March 2005.
- ¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 78th year, # 18 (21947), 25 March 2005.
- ¹⁰¹ *Zartonk*, 68th year, # 62 (19205), 27 March 2005.
- ¹⁰² *Zartonk*, 68th year, # 61 (19204), 26 March 2005.
- ¹⁰³ *Ararad*, 68th year, # 14 (17373), 1-7 April 2005.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Aztag*, 78th year, # 18 (21947), 25 March 2005.
- ¹⁰⁵ *Zartonk*, 68th year, # 64 (19207), 31 March 2005.
- ¹⁰⁶ *The Daily Star*, 29 December 2004.
- ¹⁰⁷ *L'Orient-Le Jour*, # 11298, 12 February 2005.
- ¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹⁰ *Ararad*, 68th year, # 11 (17370), 11-17 March 2005, p. 5.
- ¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 68th year, # 14 (17373), 1-7 April 2005.
- ¹¹² *L'Orient-Le Jour*, # 11320, 19-20 March 2005.
- ¹¹³ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹⁴ *Aztag*, 78th year, # 3 (21932), 8 March 2005, p. 2, & # 22 (21951), 31 March 2005, p. 2.
- ¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 78th year, # 23 (21952), 1 April 2005.
- ¹¹⁶ *Aztag*, 78th year, # 31 (21960), 11 April 2005.
- ¹¹⁷ *Zartonk*, 68th year, # 78(19221), 16 April 2005, p. 2.
- ¹¹⁸ *Ararad*, 68th year, # 15 (17374), 8-14 April 2005, p. 12.
- ¹¹⁹ *Zartonk*, 68th year, # 80 (19223), 19 April 2005.
- ¹²⁰ *Aztag*, 78th year, # 28 (21957), 7 April 2005.
- ¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 78th year, # 39 (21968), 20 April 2005.
- ¹²² *L'Orient-Le Jour*, # 11346, 23 April 2005.
- ¹²³ *Ibid.*
- ¹²⁴ *Aztag*, 78th year, # 44 (21973), 27 April 2005.
- ¹²⁵ *L'Orient-Le Jour*, # 11352, 30 April-1 May 2005.
- ¹²⁶ *Aztag*, 78th year, # 49 (21974), 5 May 2005.
- ¹²⁷ *L'Orient-Le Jour*, # 11352, 30 April-1 May 2005.
- ¹²⁸ *Aztag*, 78th year, #45 (21974), 30 April 2005.
- ¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 78th year, # 48 (21977), 4 May 2005.
- ¹³⁰ *L'Orient-Le Jour*, # 11358, 6 May 2005.
- ¹³¹ *Ibid.*
- ¹³² *Aztag*, 78th year, # 45 (21974), 30 April 2005.
- ¹³³ *Ibid.*, 78th year, # 51 (21980), 9 May 2005.
- ¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 78th year, # 48 (21977), 4 May 2005.
- ¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 78th year, # 53 (21982), 11 May 2005.
- ¹³⁶ The present writer was informed by Huntchag Central Council member Bebo Simonian, on 10 May 2005, that as MP Djeredjian had not wanted to be a candidate, the party had proposed to Saad Hariri that Albert Pamboukian, a wealthy businessman, be their candidate. Pamboukian had indicated to the Huntchag leadership he would donate US \$ 400,000 to the party. Hariri on May 9 had not agreed to change his Armenian candidates and *Sada Balad* indicated so in its issue of 10 May. It was rumored that Armenia's president, Robert Kotcharian, had intervened on behalf of the Tashnag candidate so that he be included in Hariri's list.
- ¹³⁷ *Ararad*, 68th year, # 20 (17379), 13-19 May 2005.
- ¹³⁸ *Aztag*, 78th year, # 53 (21982), 11 May 2005.
- ¹³⁹ *L'Orient-Le Jour*, #11365, 14-15 May 2005, listed Sdepan Der Bedrossian, as a candidate in Beirut III.
- ¹⁴⁰ *Aztag*, 78th year, # 54 (21983), 12 May 2005.

- ¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁴² *Zartok*, 68th year, # 97 (19239), 13 May 2005.
- ¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 68th year, # 98 (19240), 14 May 2005.
- ¹⁴⁴ *Aztag*, 78th year, # 57 (21986), 16 May 2005.
- ¹⁴⁵ *L'Orient-Le Jour*, # 11365, 14-15 May 2005.
- ¹⁴⁶ *Aztag*, 78th year, # 57 (21986), 16 May 2005.
- ¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 78th year, # 55 (21984), 13 May 2005.
- ¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 78th year, # 59 (21988), 18 May 2005.
- ¹⁴⁹ *Zartok*, 68th year, # 91(19233), 5 May 2005.
- ¹⁵⁰ *Aztag*, 78th year, # 56 (21985), 14 May 2005.
- ¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 78th year, # 58(21987), 17 May 2005.
- ¹⁵³ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 78th year, #59 (21988), 18 May 2005.
- ¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 78th year, # 60 (21989), 19 May 2005.
- ¹⁵⁸ *Zartok*, 68th year, # 102 (19244), 19 May 2005.
- ¹⁵⁹ *Ararad*, 68th year, # 21(17380), 20-26 May 2005.
- ¹⁶⁰ *Zartok*, 68th year, # 104 (19246), 21 May 2005.
- ¹⁶¹ *Aztag*, 78th year, # 60 (21989), 19 May 2005.
- ¹⁶² *Ararad*, 86th year, # 21 (17380), 20-26 May 2005.
- ¹⁶³ *Zartok*, 68th year, # 100 (19242), 17 May 2005.
- ¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 68th year, # 102 (19244), 19 May 2005.
- ¹⁶⁵ *Gantch weekly*, # 671, 21 May 2005.
- ¹⁶⁶ *Zartok*, 68th year, # 103 (19245), 20 May 2005; *Ararad*, 68th year, # 21 (17380), 20-26 May 2005.
- ¹⁶⁷ *Zartok*, 68th year, # 102 (19244), 19 May 2005.
- ¹⁶⁸ *Aztag*, 78th year, # 62 (21991), 21 May 2005
- ¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 78th year, # 63 (21992), 23 May 2005.
- ¹⁷⁰ The TPLCC representative Hovig Mekhitarian, in an interview published in *Aztag*, (78th year, # 247 (22176), 30 December 2005, p. 4), said there were initial difficulties in cooperating with Gen. Aoun, as some personalities in his current had ruled out any cooperation with them, but with their consistent efforts they had succeeded in cooperating with Aoun, along with Michel Murr.
- ¹⁷¹ *L'Orient-Le Jour*, # 11373, 24 May 2005.
- ¹⁷² *Aztag*, 78th year, # 65 (21994), 25 May 2005.
- ¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 78th year, # 64 (21993), 24 May 2005.
- ¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁷⁵ *Zartok*, 68th year, # 106 (19248), 14 May 2005.
- ¹⁷⁶ *Aztag*, 78th year, # 65 (21994), 25 May 2005.
- ¹⁷⁷ *Zartok*, 68th year, # 107 (19249), 25 May 2005.
- ¹⁷⁸ *Aztag*, 78th year, # 67 (21996), 28 May 2005.
- ¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 78th year, # 66 (21997), 27 May 2005.
- ¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 78th year, # 67 (21996), 28 May 2005.
- ¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁸² *Ibid.*
- ¹⁸³ *Balad*, # 501, 28 May 2005, p. 26.
- ¹⁸⁴ *Aztag*, 78th year, # 67 (21996), 28 May 2005.
- ¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 78th year, # 70 (21999), 1 June 2005.

- 186 *Ibid.*
- 187 *Ibid.*, 78th year, # 69(21998), 31 May 2005.
- 188 *Zartok*, 68th year, # 109(19251), 28 May 2005.
- 189 *Ibid.*, 68th year, # 110(19252), 29 May 2005.
- 190 *Ibid.*, 68th year, # 109(19251), 28 May 2005.
- 191 *Ibid.*, 68th year, # 110(19252), 29 May 2005.
- 192 *Aztag*, 78th year, # 67(21996), 28 May 2005.
- 193 *Ibid.*
- 194 *L'Orient-Le Jour*, # 11377, indicated on May 30, 2005, that there were 5,066 Jewish names on the voters lists, but hardly 10 had voted. Most had left Lebanon.
- 195 *Balad*, # 501, 28 May 2005, p. 6.
- 196 *Ibid.*
- 197 *L'Orient-Le Jour*, # 11378, 31 May 2005.
- 198 *Aztag*, 78th year, # 68 (21997), 30 May 2005.
- 199 *Ibid.*
- 200 *Ibid.*
- 201 On May 28, 2005, Mikael Vayejian, head of the electoral campaign office at Tekeyan Center, informed the present writer that the number of Armenian voters they had in the three Beirut electoral districts was 4,000, distributed as follows: Ramgavars 1,100, Huntchags 1,700, supporters of Oghassapian 800, supporters of Hariri-activist Sisserian 400.
- 202 *Aztag*, 78th year, # 68(21997), 30 May 2005.
- 203 *Zartok*, 68th year, # 111(19253), 31 May 2005.
- 204 *Aztag*, 78th year, # 11377, 30 May 2005.
- 205 *L'Orient-Le Jour*, # 11377, 30 May 2005.
- 206 *Zartok*, 68th year, # 111(19253), 31 May 2005.
- 207 *Ibid.*, p. 2.
- 208 Dr. Hrair Serabian, resident in Ashrafieh, an independent person, informed the present writer about such an incident that happened to him.
- 209 *L'Orient-Le Jour*, # 11377, 30 May 2005.
- 210 *Ibid.*, # 11378, 31 May 2005.
- 211 *Ibid.*
- 212 *Ibid.*, # 11377, 30 May 2005.
- 213 *Ibid.*, #11378, 31 May 2005, p. 4; *Aztag*, 78th year, # 69 (21998), 31 May 2005.
- 214 *Aztag*, 78th year, # 69 (21998), 31 May 2005.
- 215 *Ibid.*, 78th year, # 72 (22001), 3 June 2005.
- 216 *L'Orient-Le Jour*, # 11382, 4 June 2005.
- 217 *Ibid.*
- 218 *Zartok*, 68th year, # 115 (19257), 4 June (inscribed wrongly May) 2005.
- 219 *Aztag*, 78th year, # 7 (22004), 7 June 2005.
- 220 *Ibid.*, 78th year, # 76 (22005), 8 June 2005.
- 221 *Ibid.*, 78th year, # 73 (22002), 4 June 2005.
- 222 *Ibid.*, 78th year, # 76 (22005), 8 June 2005.
- 223 *L'Orient-Le Jour*, #11382, 4 June 2005.
- 224 *Ibid.*, # 11377, 30 May 2005.
- 225 *Aztag*, 78th year, # 77 (22006), 9 June 2005.
- 226 *Ibid.*
- 227 *Ibid.*, 78th year, # 78 (22007), 10 June 2005, p. 3.
- 228 *Ibid.*, 78th year, # 79 (22608), 11 June 2005, p. 10.

- ²²⁹ *Ibid.* 78th year, # 79 (22608) the newspaper was mistakenly numbered instead of 22008, 22608 - 11 June 2005.
- ²³⁰ *Aztag*, 78th year, # 68(21997), 30 May 2005.
- ²³¹ *Ibid.*
- ²³² *L'Orient-Le Jour*, # 11377, 30 May 2005.
- ²³³ *Zartok*, 68th year, # 113 (19255), 2 June 2005.
- ²³⁴ *Aztag*, 78th year, # 75(22004), 7 June 2005; *Zartok*, 68th year, # 118(19260), 8 June 2005.
- ²³⁵ *Aztag*, 78th year, # 76 (22005), 8 June 2005.
- ²³⁶ *Aztag*, 78th year, # 78 (22007), 10 June 2005.
- ²³⁷ *L'Orient-Le Jour*, # 1138913 June 2005.
- ²³⁸ *Zartok*, 68th year, # 115 (19257), 4 June 2005.
- ²³⁹ *Ibid.* 68th year, # 119 (19261), 9 June 2005.
- ²⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 68th year, # 112, (19264), 12 June 2005.
- ²⁴¹ *Aztag*, 78th year, # 75 (22004), 7 June 2005.
- ²⁴² *Ararad*, 68th year, # 124 (17383), 10-16 June 2005.
- ²⁴³ *Gantch* weekly, # 674, 11 June 2005.
- ²⁴⁴ *Aztag*, 78th year, # 75 (22004), 7 June 2005.
- ²⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 78th year, # 73 (22002), 4 June 2005.
- ²⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 78th year, # 74 (22003), 6 June 2005.
- ²⁴⁷ *L'Orient-Le Jour*, # 11389, 13 June 2005.
- ²⁴⁸ *Ibid.* # 11390, 14 June 2005, p. 2. The results of Chaparian and Chinchinian were taken from *Nahar*, Beirut, 72nd year, # 22334, 14 June 2005.
- ²⁴⁹ *Aztag*, 78th year, # 80 (22609), 13 June 2005.
- ²⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 78th year, # 81 (22610), 14 June 2005.
- ²⁵¹ *Razmig* [periodical], Beirut, July-August 2005.
- ²⁵² *Aztag*, 78th year, # 82 (22611), 15 June 2005.
- ²⁵³ *Zartok*, 68th year, # 127 (19269), 18 June 2005.
- ²⁵⁴ *Aztag*, 78th year, # 84 (22613), 17 June 2005; *Ibid.* 78th year, # 85 (22014) 18 June 2005, (the newspaper realized its error and rectified the number from 22613 to 22014).
- ²⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 78th year, # 84 (22613), 17 June 2005.
- ²⁵⁶ *Zartok*, 68th year, # 144 (19286), 8 July 2005.
- ²⁵⁷ *Ararad*, 68th year, # 126 (17285), 24-30 June 2005.
- ²⁵⁸ *Aztag*, 78th year, # 94 (22023), 29 June 2005.
- ²⁵⁹ *Zartok*, 68th year, # 172 (19314), 10 August 2005.
- ²⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 68th year, # 159 (19301), 26 July 2005, p. 2.
- ²⁶¹ *Ibid.*
- ²⁶² *Ibid.* 68th year, # 164 (19306), 31 July 2005.
- ²⁶³ *Aztag*, 78th year, # 136 (22065), 7 August 2005.
- ²⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 78th year, 9 November 2005.
- ²⁶⁵ *Zartok*, 69th year, # 42 (19473), 1 March 2006.

ՀԱՅՈՑ ՄԱՍՆԱԿՑՈՒԹԻՒՆԸ
ԷՄԻԼ ԼԱՀՈՒՏԻ (1998-2007) ՆԱԽԱԳԱՀՈՒԹԵԱՆ ԺԱՄԱՆԱԿԱՇՐՋԱՆԻ
ԼԻՐԱՆԱՆԻ ԽՈՐՀՐԴԱՐԱՆԱԿԱՆ ԸՆՏՐՈՒԹԻՒՆՆԵՐՈՒՆ (Բ.)
(Ամփոփում)

ՋԱԻՆ ՄՍԸՐԼԵԱՆ

Հեղինակը հիմնուելով ժամանակակից լիբանանահայ, առաւել՝ Լիբանանի մէջ լոյս տեսնող մի քանի ֆրանսատառ եւ անգլիատառ թերթերու, հայկական թերթերու մէջ տեղական թերթերէ թարգմանարար արուած տեղեկութիւններու, ինչպէս նաեւ անձնական հաղորդակցութեամբ կուտակուած տեղեկութիւններու վրայ, հանգամանորէն կը ներկայացնէ Լիբանանի 2005 թուականի խորհրդարանական ընտրութիւններուն հայկական մասնակցութիւնը Պէյրութի, Հլուսիային Մեթնի եւ Չահլէի ընտրալրջաններուն մէջ, ուր հայ համայնքներուն յատկացուած էին վեց երեսփոխանական ամրոտներ:

Քարամէի կառավարութեան կազմութենէն ետք քայլեր առնուած էին 2000 թուականի ընտրական օրէնքը բարեփոխելու: Ըստ կարգ մը թերթերու անոր նպատակն էր «Ռաֆիք Հարիրիի քեները կտարել»: Ընտրական օրինագիծին քննարկումի շրջանին, Հարիրի ահարեկումի զոհ գնաց: Այս դէպքը յեղաշրջեց կացութիւնը: Քարամէ հրաժարեցաւ եւ կրկին անգամ չկրցաւ կառավարութիւն կազմել: Մինչ այդ երկու հակամարտ կողմեր յառաջ եկան՝ Մարտ 8ի ուժերը (Հրգպալլա, Ամայ, Աունի Հոսանք, Ծրանճիէի Մարտաա, Ղովմիներ եւն.) եւ Մարտ 14ի ուժերը (Հարիրիականներ, Ընկերվար Յառաջդիմական Կուսակցութիւն, Փաղանգաւորներ, Լիբանանեան Ուժեր, եւն.), որոնք մեծ ցոյցեր կազմակերպեցին առաջինը ի նպաստ Սուրիոյ եւ երկրորդը Սուրիոյ դէմ: Միջազգային ճնշումով սուրիացիք Լիբանանէն իրենց ուժերը քաշեցին: Նեժիպ Միքաթիի կառավարութիւնը որոշեց ընտրութիւնները կայացնել 2000ի օրէնքին հիմամբ, հակառակ նախագահ Լահուտի ընդդիմութեան, որ սակայն ի վերջոյ հարկադրուեցաւ օրէնքը ստորագրելու:

ՀՅԴանակցութիւնը Մարտ 8ի ուժերուն հետ էր, իսկ ՄԴՀԿ ու ՌԱԿ Մարտ 14ի ուժերուն հետ: ՀՅԴ դէմ էր 2000ի օրէնքին եւ երբ Սասա Հարիրի մերժեց ՀՅԴ թեկնածուները առնել իր ցանկերուն վրայ, ՀՅԴ որոշեց պոչքոթել Պէյրութի ընտրութիւնները: Ուստի Հարիրիի ցանկին վրայ գտնուող հայ թեկնածուները՝ Տքթ. Սդիկ Ճէրէճեան (ՄԴՀԿ), Յակոբ Գասարճեան (ՌԱԿ), եւ անկուսակցականներ՝ Ժան Օղասափեան ու Սերժ Թուրսարգիսեան անմրցակից ըլլալով պետական երեսփոխան հռչակուեցան:

Մեթնի մէջ, ՀՅԴ որ զօրաւոր դիրքերու վրայ էր, կրցաւ Չօր. Աունի եւ Միշէյ Մըրի միջեւ մերձեցում յառաջացնել եւ իր թեկնածուն՝ Յակոբ Բազրատունին, ընտրուեցաւ երեսփոխան: Չահլէի մէջ ՀՅԴի որդեգրած թեկնածուն՝ Ծորճ Գասարճի, Էլիաս Աքաֆի ցանկէն ընտրուեցաւ: Մեթնի եւ Չահլէի մէջ Մարտ 14ի հայ թեկնածուները յաղութեան չհասան:

Լիբանանահայ գաղութին մէջ յարուածութեան շրջանէ մը ետք, Ազգային Համախոհութեան նիստերուն, երեք հայ կուսակցութիւններու երեսփոխանները հերթարար ներկայացուցին լիբանանահայութիւնը:

