

Creation of National Unity Cabinet through Internal Dialogue

March 8 and March 14 Forces not Trusted by Lebanese

Lebanon witnessed over the past few months major political and security developments that reshaped the country's political equations. The Lebanese people's positions were divided according to each za'im's political or confessional considerations or to personal ambitions. Of course, all pretend to be seeking national interests.

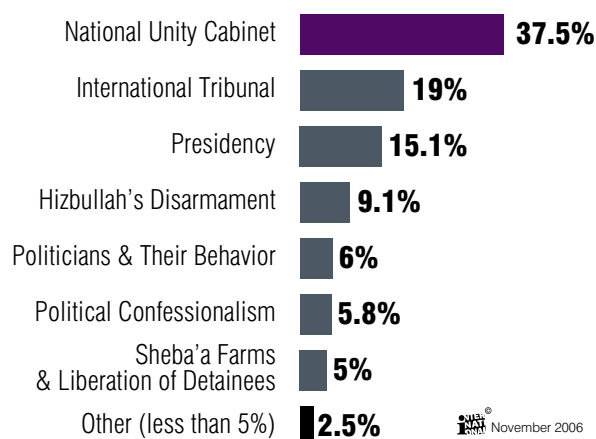
Ii Monthly conducted an opinion poll between November 15–23, 2006 on a sample of the Lebanese population about current issues and latest developments.

The Major Issue in Lebanon Today

The majority (37.5%) said the creation of a national unity Cabinet was their main issue of concern, followed by the formation of an international tribunal to try the assassins of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri (19%), the presidency of the republic (15.1%) and Hizbullah's disarmament (9.1%). On the other hand, 6% of the respondents blamed politicians and their behavior for the current situation, 5.8% said the problem was about political confessionalism, followed by the liberation of the Sheba'a Farms and the detainees (5%) - (graph no. 1). 1.3% stated that the major issue was the behavior of religious leaders, while 1.2% listed other issues.

Accordingly, the majority of the respondents (71.6%) considered that the three major issues were the national unity government, the international tribunal and the presidency.

[Graph 1] **What is the major issue in Lebanon?**



As for the distribution of answers by confessions, 60% of the Shia'a respondents were for the creation of a national unity government, followed by 33.3% Catholic, 33% Orthodox, and 31.4% Maronites. On the other hand, 34.9% of the Druze respondents were for the formation of an international tribunal followed by 33.4% Sunni (table no. 1).

The following Table no.1 shows the distribution of answers according to confessions.

Distribution of answers according to confessions						Table 1
Major Problem or Cause	Maronite %	Greek Orthodox %	Greek Catholic %	Shia'a %	Sunni %	Druze %
National unity Cabinet	31.4	33	33.3	60.4	25.3	16.9
Formation of an international tribunal	16	16.5	27	4.5	33.4	34.9
Presidency	25.4	18.3	9.5	5.6	15.2	21.7
Hizbullah's disarmament	8	8.3	9.5	9.4	9.9	10.8
Politicians and their behavior	6	6.4	7.9	4.3	6.3	7.2
Political confessionalism	7.4	4.6	11.1	5.6	3	4.8
Israeli withdrawal from the Sheba'a Farms and liberation of detainees	2.9	4.6	1.6	9.2	4.3	2.4
Religious leaders' behavior	1.4	6.4	-	0.5	0.8	1.2
Other issues	1.4	1.8	-	0.5	1.8	-

Source: Information International - November 2006

As to the distribution of answers according to the place of residence (Mohafaza), the formation of an international tribunal was the major problem for respondents from Beirut* (40%), while the creation of a national unity Cabinet was the main issue of the majority of respondents in the South** (57.4%), in the Beqa'a (40.7%) in Mount Lebanon (26.5%) and in the North (32.7%). The respondents' answers came in line with their confessional affiliation, as each area is dominated by a particular confession.

The Best Means to Resolve the Major Issue or Problem

The majority of respondents (52%) believed that internal dialogue is the best solution to the current issues. Only 15% said demonstrations and protests would achieve this purpose, while 11.9% said the problem would be resolved by holding early parliamentary elections, 8.4% said the solution resided in eliminating political confessionalism, 6.1% listed the armed resistance against Israel (graph no.2), 2.5% listed the non-interference of religious leaders in political affairs, 2.4% proposed dialogue with Israel through the United Nations, 1.1% said violence and fighting are the solution, and 0.6% said the resignation of President Emile Lahoud would resolve the problem.

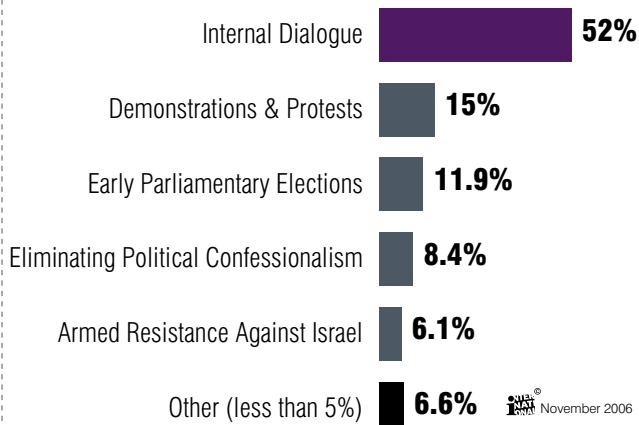
Describing the March 8 and the March 14 Forces

The overwhelming majority of Lebanon is divided into two sides: the first was called the March 8 Forces and mainly included Hizbullah, Amal Movement, Al Marada party and other political figures. Today, it is called "the opposition" after the Free Patriotic Movement joined it. The second side, the ruling power, is called the March 14 Forces and includes the Future Movement, the Progressive Socialist Party, the Lebanese Forces and other political figures.

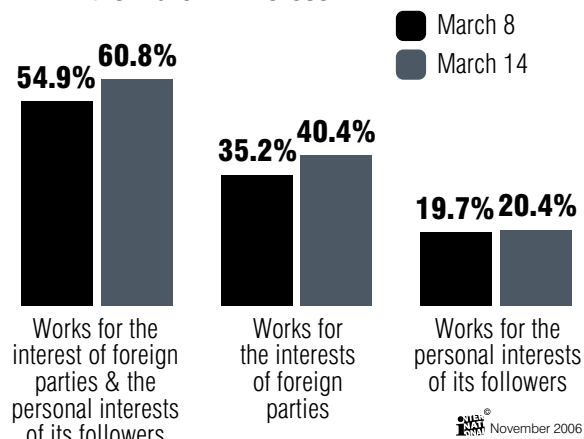
Consequently, each side is accusing the other of serving personal and foreign ambitions.

45.2% of respondents said the March 8 Forces is a Lebanese and national group, against 39.3% who attributed these qualities to the March 14 Forces. Moreover, 35.2% of respondents said the March 8 Forces is a Lebanese group that fulfills the interests of foreign parties, while 40.4% accused the other side of doing so. 19.7% of respondents said the March 8 group works for its followers' personal interests against 20.4% who believed that the March 14

[Graph 2] **What is the best means to resolve the major problems?**



[Graph 3] **Describing the March 8 and the March 14 Forces**



group is doing so. Thus, 54.9% of the respondents have a negative opinion about the March 8 Forces versus 60.8% for the March 14 group (graph no. 3). This also means that around 57.9% of the Lebanese have a negative opinion about both sides (or even do not trust them) versus 42.1%. The distribution of answers by confessions is shown in the following table no.2.

Distribution of answers by confession (%)						Table 2
	Maronite	Orthodox	Catholic	Sunni	Shia'a	Druze
March 8 is a Lebanese national group	32.9%	28.2%	34.8%	18.4%	90.5%	19.2%
Lebanese group that works for foreign parties' interests	45.4%	47.6%	39.1%	52.5%	4%	61.4%
Works for its followers' personal interests	21.7%	24.2%	26.1%	29.1%	5.5%	19.4%
March 14 is a Lebanese national group	41.3%	29.7%	46.7%	73%	2.5%	66.3%
Lebanese group that works for foreign parties' interests	37.8%	43.6%	33.3%	15.8%	72%	21.7%
Works for its followers' personal interests	20.9%	26.7%	20%	11.2%	25.5%	12%

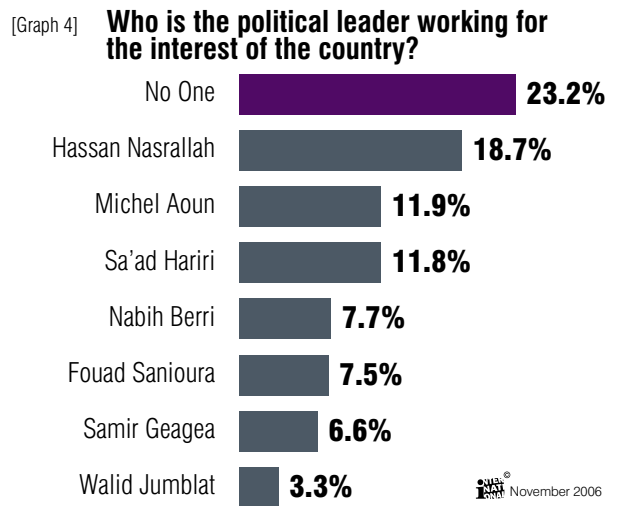
Source: Information International - November 2006

Table no.2 highlights confessional divisions, as the overwhelming majority of Shia'a supports the March 8 Forces while that of the Sunni and the Druze supports the March 14 Forces. The rate of support of the March 8 and the March 14 groups is almost the same for the Orthodox confession, while the majority of Maronite and Catholic backs the March 14 Forces.

The Political Leader working for National Interests

23.2% of respondents said that none of the Lebanese politicians is acting wisely and responsibly. 18.7% said Hassan Nasrallah is doing so, 11.9% voted for Michel Aoun, 7.7% for Sa'ad Hariri, 7.5% for Nabih Berri, 6.6% for Samir Geagea and only 3.3% for Walid Jumblat (graph no. 4). 0.5 to 0.1% of respondents named other politicians.

Despite wide confessional and political divisions, a high percentage of Lebanese people have negative opinions about both the March 8 and the March 14 forces. Moreover, a quarter of respondents do not believe any political leader to be acting responsibly. This might highlight the gap between the citizens and their zua'ama.



“No One” is the political leader working for the interest of the country.”

* Based on the voters' register in Beirut

** Based on the voters' register in the South

Description of the sample

The poll was conducted between November 15-23, 2006 on 1500 women and men in the different Lebanese areas respectively and according to the voters in each area, also respectively and the number of voters of each confession in these areas. Respondents were of different ages and different social levels and incomes.