

# A High Trust in Lebanese Army and Security Forces

## Equal Support to March 8 and 14 Less Support to both Aoun and Hizbullah's Arms

While politicians are engaged in squabbling and disputes over power sharing arrangements and other controversial issues, the Lebanese are looking for peace and security. At least, this is what an opinion poll conducted by **Information International** in February 2007 showed.

The first part of the opinion poll focused on the Lebanese people's stands towards the forces of March 8 and 14, Hizbullah's weapons, latest security developments, rearmament of political parties, the role of the military forces, causes and solutions to the current crisis, as well as their most preferred candidates for the presidency and the premiership.

### Political Belonging

The Lebanese are politically divided between the opposition (March 8 and Free Patriotic Movement) and the pro-government (March 14 forces). 38.3% of respondents reported to belong to the March 14 forces against 27.5% with the March 8 and 12.9% with the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM or Michel Aoun's party), totaling to 40.5% of the respondents belonging to the opposition.

The Lebanese political arena registered this month the entry of a new movement – the March 11 – with only 3.1% of supporters.

18.2% of Lebanese reported not to belong to any movement or party (graph no.1).

These numbers indicate that the Lebanese are equally divided between the March 8 and March 14 forces and that around the quarter of respondents do not support any of them. Only 5.6% of respondents reported to have changed their political belonging in light of political developments. (1.3% were with the FPM, 1.8% were with the March 14 and 0.6% with the March 8). **The respondents' strong adherence to their political affiliation highlighted a wide rupture among the Lebanese despite the fact that around 58% said they did not trust any of the March 8 and March 14 forces** (see *Ii Monthly* issue no.54).

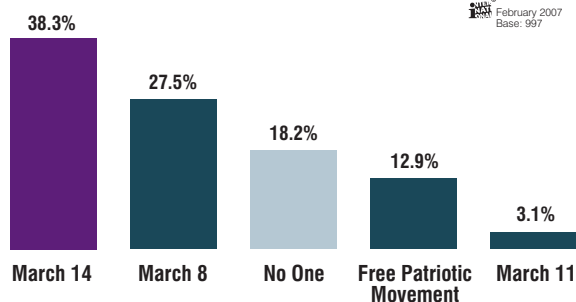
The respondents' positions toward the different political movements by confession showed that the majority of Maronites, Catholics, Sunni and Druze were with the March 14 forces, while the majority of Shia'a and Orthodox and a large number of Maronites and Catholics belonged to the March 8 and the FPM (table no.1).

**Distribution of Respondents' Positions by Confession Table 1**

Movement	Maronite	Greek Orthodox	Greek Catholic	Sunni	Shia'a	Druze
March 8	10.5%	5%	4.1%	10.8%	75.8%	3.5%
March 14	41.2%	32.5%	38.8%	67.7%	3%	84.2%
Free Patriotic Movement	23.2%	33.8%	22.4%	0.4%	8.2%	1.8%
March 11	4.8%	1.3%	6.1%	1.1%	3.7%	-
No one	20.3%	27.4%	28.6%	20%	9.3%	10.5%

Source: Information International – February 2007

[Graph 1] **Which group do you belong to? (%)**



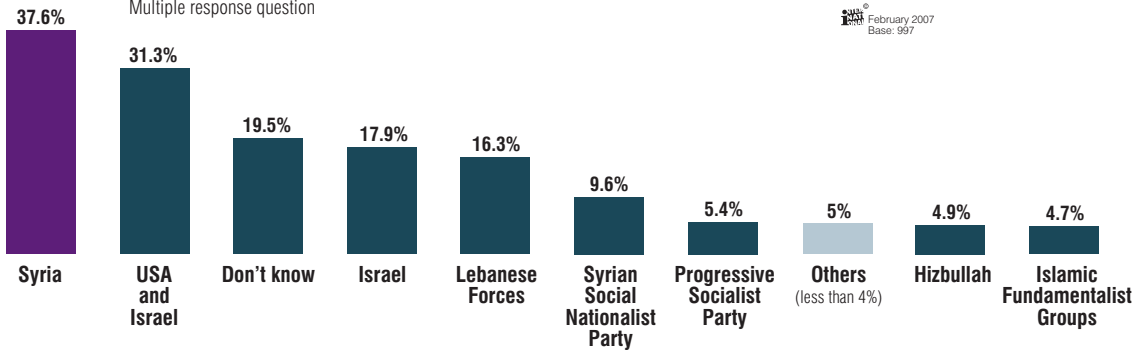
### Responsibility for Explosions and Assassinations

The wide division in political affiliation was also highlighted in the people's opinions about the parties behind the series of explosions and assassinations. 37.6% of respondents said they believe that Syria was perpetrating these crimes, against 17.9% who accused Israel and 31.3% who accused both the United States and Israel.

(Graph 2)

**In your opinion who stands guilty of the assassinations and explosions in Lebanon? (%)**

Multiple response question

February 2007  
Base: 997

16.3% of respondents held the Lebanese Forces Party responsible for assassinations and explosions, while 9.6% accused the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, 5.4% accused the Progressive Socialist Party, 4.9% said Hizbullah and 4.7% said Islamic fundamentalist groups (graph no.2).

## Hizbullah's Arms

Last month, the Lebanese Army confiscated a truck full of arms belonging to Hizbullah in the area of Hazmieh in Matn.

51.2% of respondents voiced their support to the confiscation of the arms, while 37.1% opposed this measure, and 11.7% said they did not know whether it was a positive step.

The distribution of the answers by confession showed that more than 70% of respondents in each confession supported the confiscation, except for the Shia'a, as only 6.3% supported this measure against 88.5% who were against the confiscation (table no.2).

**Distribution of Respondents' Positions Toward the Confiscation of Hizbullah's Arms** Table 2

Confession Position	Maronite	Greek Orthodox	Greek Catholic	Sunni	Shia'a	Druze
Support the confiscation	69.3%	70%	71.4%	67.7%	6.3%	87.7%
Against the confiscation	16.2%	18.8%	14.3%	19.7%	88.5%	8.8%
Do not know	14.5%	11.2%	14.3%	12.6%	5.2%	3.5%

Source: Information International – February 2007

As to the distribution of respondents by political belonging, 95% of respondents from the March 14 Forces supported the confiscation, against 3.3% of respondents from the March 8 and 35.7% of respondents from the FPM (table no.3).

**Distribution of Respondents by Belonging** Table 3

Belonging Position	Belonging				
	March 8	March 11	March 14	Free Patriotic Movement	Neutral*
Support the confiscation	3.3%	32.3%	95%	35.7%	45.3%
Against the confiscation	95.3%	25.8%	1.8%	44.2%	20.4%
Do not know	1.5%	41.9%	3.1%	20.2%	34.3%

\*Neutral are respondents who do not support any group, political party or force.

Source: Information International – February 2007

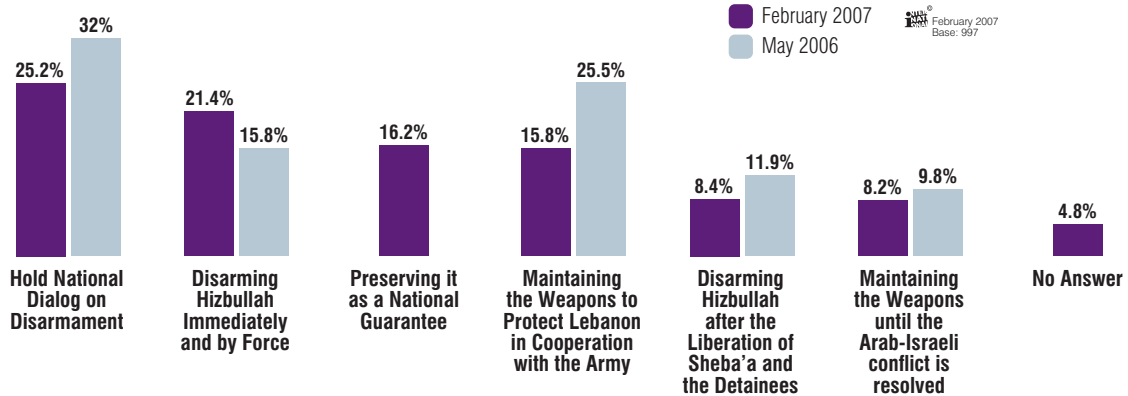
As to the people's positions toward Hizbullah's arms, the majority of respondents (25.2%) said national dialogue should be held on disarmament, against 21.4% who said Hizbullah should be disarmed immediately and by force.

On the other hand, 16.2% said the arms should be preserved as a national guarantee, while 15.8% said it should be preserved to defend Lebanon in cooperation with the Army. 8.4% of respondents said Hizbullah should be disarmed after Israel withdraws from the Sheba'a Farms and liberates the detainees, 8.2% said Hizbullah should keep its arms until the Arab-Israeli conflict is resolved and 4.8% said they did not know (graph no.3).

In a poll conducted by *Information International* in May 2006, answers came as follows: 15.8% supported Hizbullah's immediate disarmament, 32% called for dialogue on this issue, 25.5% said the arms should be preserved until a solution is reached to protect Lebanon from Israel. 11.9% said Hizbullah should keep its arms until the liberation of Sheba'a Farms and the detainees, while 9.8% said the weapons should be maintained by the group until the Arab-Israeli conflict is settled.

These figures highlight a decrease in the support to Hizbullah's weapons.

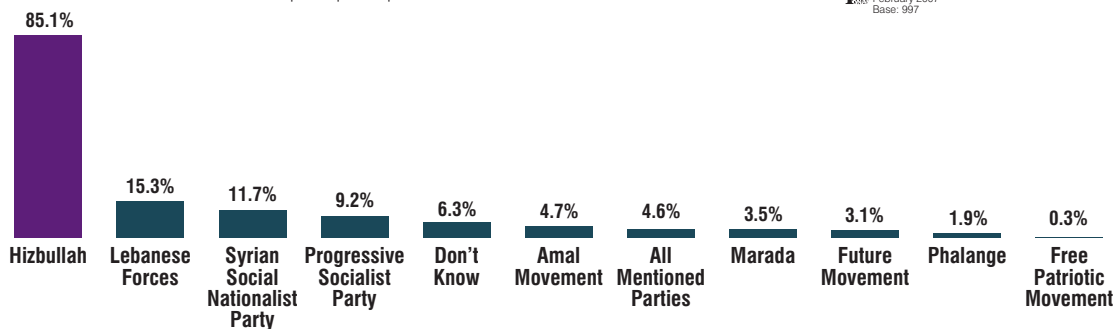
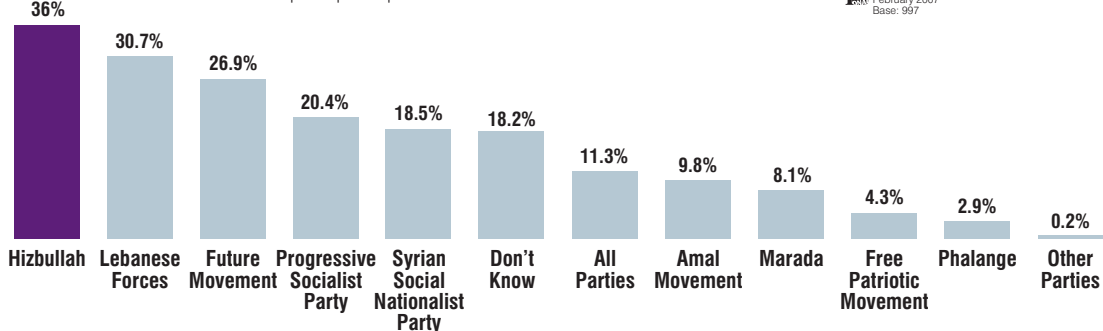
[Graph 3] What is your stance in Hizbullah's arms? (%)



## Armament of Political Parties

Talks about some parties' armament have recently started as each party is accusing the other of training its members and buying weapons. When asked about the party that owns the largest number of weapons, the overwhelming majority (85.1%) named Hizbullah, while 15.3% named the Lebanese Forces Party, 11.7% said the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, 9.2% said the Progressive Socialist Party, 4.7% said Amal Movement, 3.5% said Al-Marada Party, 3.1% named the Future Movement, 1.9% said the Phalange Party and 0.3% said the Free Patriotic Movement (graph no.4).

As to the party that is currently receiving arms, 36% of respondents said Hizbullah, 30.7% said the Lebanese Forces, 26.9% named the Future Movement, 20.4% said the Progressive Socialist Party, 18.5% named the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, 9.8% said Amal Movement, 8.1% said Al-Marada, 4.3% said the FPM, 2.9% said the Phalange, while 11.3% said all abovementioned parties have started to rearm (graph no.5).

[Graph 4] In your opinion, which party owns weapons in large quantities? (%)  
Multiple response question[Graph 5] In your opinion, which party is still receiving weapons? (%)  
Multiple response question

## Trust in Security and Military Bodies

81.1% of Lebanese voiced their trust in security and military institutions (43.3% have a high trust, 37.8% trust the military bodies to a certain extent, compared with 17.9% that have little trust or do not trust them at all). 1% said they did not know (graph no.6).

## Responsibility for Street Clashes

On the 23rd and 25th of January 2007, several people were killed and dozens injured in street clashes in Beirut and surrounding areas. 34.3% of respondents held the pro-government forces responsible for these clashes against 33.4% who accused the opposition. 17.1% accused both the opposition and the pro-government forces, while 7% held Arab and Lebanese media institutions responsible for instigating the clashes. 1.6% said the security forces were responsible as they did not use force to stop the rioters and 6.6% said they did not know.

## Causes of the Current Crisis

More than half of the respondents (56.5%) believe that Lebanon's crisis is the result of foreign interference against only 7.6% who believe that it is caused by internal problems. 15.2% of respondents blame the crisis on regional reasons and 19.8% on the intertwinement between local and regional causes (graph no.7).

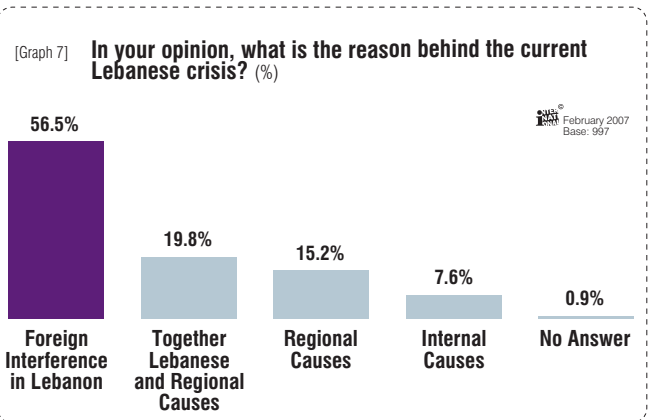
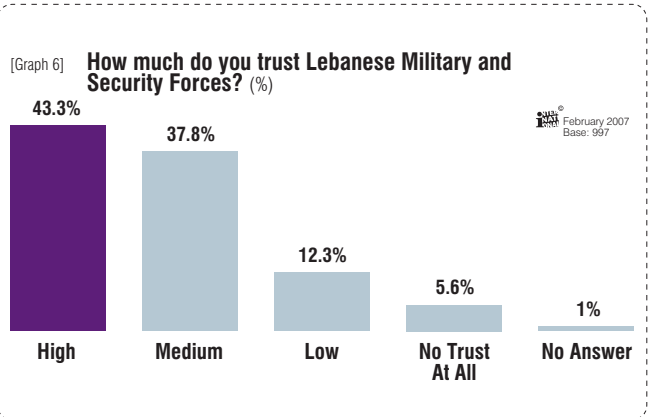
## Solution to the Crisis

The quarter of respondents (25.1%) said the resignation of President Emile Lahoud would end the crisis in Lebanon, while 22% said the solution resided in the government's resignation and 20.8% said the resumption of national dialogue. 18.3% called for early parliamentary elections, 8.5% for the resignation of both Lahoud and the government and 5.3% said they did not know (graph no.8). The distribution of these positions by confession is shown in table no.4.

Table no.4 highlights confessional considerations in the answers of respondents, as the majority of Shia'a (48.7%) said the solution resided in the resignation of the government, while the majority of Sunni (46.5%) and Druze (50.9%) said that Lahoud's resignation was the solution.

## Most Preferred Candidate for Presidency

Michel Aoun is still at the top of the most preferred presidential candidates, as he is supported by 29.4% of respondents. The second on the list is Boutros Harb, with 10.8% of supporters. Riad Salameh comes third with 9.3%,



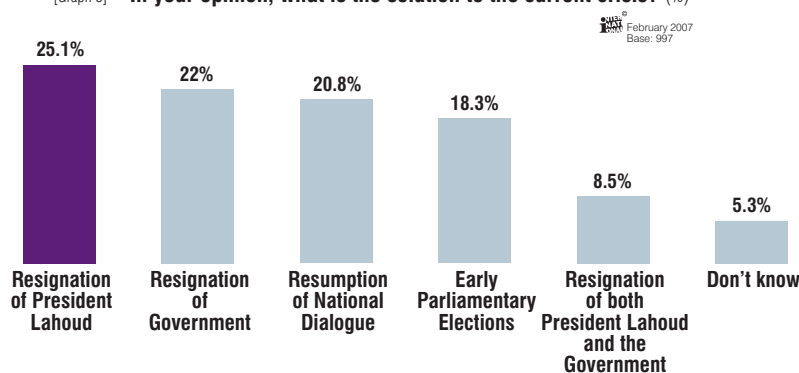
**Solutions Proposed to End the Crisis by Confession Table 4**

Solution	Maronite	Greek Orthodox	Greek Catholic	Sunni	Shia'a	Druze
Government resignation	19.3%	16.3%	12.2%	4.1%	48.7%	3.5%
President Lahoud resignation	28.5%	20%	18.4%	46.5%	1.9%	50.9%
Resignation of Lahoud and government	12.7%	18.8%	6.1%	4.5%	5.9%	10.5%
Early parliamentary elections	11%	20%	20.4%	9.7%	33.1%	1.8%
Resumption of national dialogue	22.4%	18.8%	32.7%	29.4%	7.4%	28%
Do not know	6.1%	6.1%	10.2%	5.8%	3%	5.3%

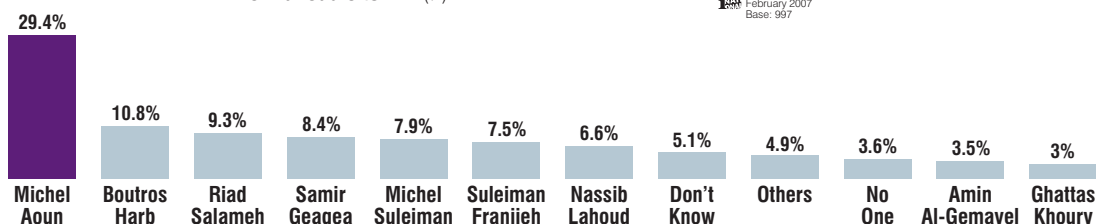
Source: Information International - February 2007

“More than half of the respondents (56.5%) believe that Lebanon's crisis is the result of foreign interference against only 7.6% who believe that it is caused by internal problems.”

[Graph 8] In your opinion, what is the solution to the current crisis? (%)



[Graph 9] Who is your most preferred candidate for the presidency after the end of Lahoud's term? (%)



Samir Geagea 8.4%, Michel Suleiman 7.9%, Suleiman Franjieh 7.5%, Nassib Lahoud 6.6%. Amin al-Gemayel was supported by 3.5% of respondents and Ghattas Khoury by 3% (graph no.9).

A comparison between the current results and a previous poll conducted by *Information International* in August 2006 shows a decrease in the popularity of Michel Aoun, who had received 45% of support. However, Boutros Harb and Suleiman Franjieh maintained the same position, while the level of support for Samir Geagea and Riad Salameh increased. Table no.5 shows the level of support for each figure by confession in 2006 and 2007.

Level of Support for Each Figure by Confession in 2006 and 2007

Table 5

Candidate	% of current supporters (Feb 2007)	% of supporters in Aug 2006	% of supporters in May 2006	Currently (February 2007)						August 2006					
				Maronite	Orthodox	Catholic	Sunni	Shia'a	Druze	Maronite	Orthodox	Catholic	Sunni	Shia'a	Druze
Michel Aoun	29.4%	45%	46.8%	26.8%	41.3%	22.4%	6.3%	54.6%	3.5%	39.9%	39.7%	51.6%	16.4%	81.4%	13.3%
Boutros Harb	10.8%	10.9%	14%	9.6%	13.8%	10.2%	20.4%	1.9%	15.8%	10.6%	13.2%	9.7%	21.3%	0.5%	20%
Riad Salameh	9.3%	4.6%	5.3%	10.1%	8.8%	16.3%	11.5%	4.8%	14%	3.2%	7.4%	9.7%	8.2%	1.8%	6.7%
Samir Geagea	8.4%	6.4%	3.4%	17.5%	5%	10.2%	10.4%	0.4%	5.3%	15.4%	10.3%	9.7%	2.9%	-	6.7%
Suleiman Franjieh	7.5%	7.1%	3.4%	6.1%	1.3%	4.1%	1.1%	17.8%	1.8%	10.6%	5.9%	3.2%	2.9%	10.9%	2.2%
Nassib Lahoud	6.6%	8.4%	11.9%	4.4%	3.8%	8.2%	12.6%	1.9%	17.5%	7.4%	10.3%	-	15.9%	0.5%	22.2%
Others	22.9% (including Amin al-Gemayel 3.5% - Ghattas Khoury 3%)	9.8%	14%	19%	21%	16.4%	23.2%	13.4%	38.5%	6%	10.3%	6.4%	16%	2.3%	24.4%
Do not know	5.1%	7.8%	1.2%	6.5%	5%	12.2%	14.5%	5.2%	3.6%	6.9%	2.9%	9.7%	16.4%	2.6%	4.5%

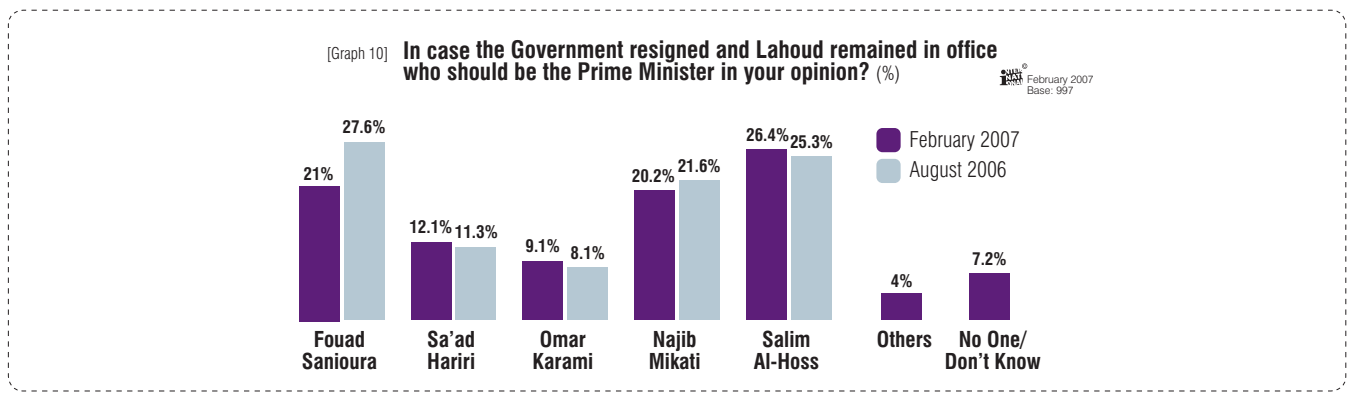
Source: Information International – February 2007

## Most Preferred Candidate for Premiership

In case a change in the government occurred and Lahoud remained in office, the majority of respondents (26.4%) chose Salim al-Hoss to form a new government, while 21% chose Fouad Sanioura, 20.2% Najib Mikati, 12.1% Sa'ad Hariri, 9.1% Omar Karami and 4% named other figures. 7.2% of respondents said they did not know who to choose (graph no.10). These answers are distributed by confession as shown in table no.6

Most Preferred Candidate for the Premiership by Confession							Table 6
Most preferred candidate for the premiership	Confession						
	Maronite	Greek Orthodox	Greek Catholic	Sunni	Shia'a	Druze	
Salim al-Hoss	15.8%	21.3%	22.4%	9.7%	56.5%	12.3%	
Fouad Sanioura	22.8%	15%	26.5%	35.3%	1.9%	52.6%	
Najib Mikati	26%	43.8%	20.4%	15.6%	13.4%	12.3%	
Sa'ad Hariri	10.5%	8.8%	12.2%	27.9%	1.9%	1.8%	
Omar Karami	10.1%	1.3%	2%	3.7%	17.8%	1.8%	
Others	6%	1%	4.2%	3.7%	1.1%	15.7%	
Do not know	8.8%	8.8%	12.3%	4.1%	7.4%	3.5%	

*Source: Information International – February 2007*



In the poll conducted by *Information International* in August 2006, Fouad Sanioura ranked first with 27.6%, followed by Salim al-Hoss with 25.3%, Najib Mikati 21.6, Sa'ad Hariri 11.3% and Omar Karami 8.1%.

In case Lahoud resigned and a new president was elected, the level of support to Sanioura decreased to 17.7% and that of Sa'ad Hariri increased to 17.5%.

“The majority of respondents (26.4%) chose Salim al-Hoss to form a new government, while 21% chose Fouad Sanioura.”



## Conclusion

The opinion poll shows the following:

- ⦿ The Lebanese are equally divided between the March 8 and March 14 forces. They remained loyal to their political affiliations despite developments that shook the country over the past months and despite their declining trust in both March 8 and 14.
- ⦿ The United States, Israel and Syria are at the top of parties accused by the Lebanese of being behind explosions and assassinations.
- ⦿ More than the half of respondents approved the confiscation of the truck containing weapons of Hizbullah in February 2007.
- ⦿ The level of support to Hizbullah has decreased against an increase in calls for its disarmament whether by force or dialogue.
- ⦿ Hizbullah is at the top of groups which according to the Lebanese own and receive weapons, followed by the Lebanese Forces and the Future Movement.
- ⦿ Military and security bodies are trusted by the majority of Lebanese (81.1%).
- ⦿ The majority of Lebanese believe that the current crisis in Lebanon was the result of foreign interference.
- ⦿ The quarter of respondents believe that the solution to the crisis was the resignation of President Emile Lahoud. Around the same percentage believe that the solution resided in the resignation of the Cabinet and resumption of dialogue.
- ⦿ Michel Aoun remains the most preferred candidate for the presidency despite a decrease in the level of respondents' support to him.
- ⦿ Salim al-Hoss ranked first among the most preferred candidates for the premiership, indicating a yearning towards appeasement. ♦

### Description of the sample

The opinion poll was conducted between February 22-28, 2007 on a sample of 1,000 citizens in different Lebanese areas, with a proportional distribution according to the number of residents and the electoral size of each confession in each qada'a.

Males represented 58.3% of respondents and females 41.7% distributed by age categories as follows:

24% between 18-24 years old  
 23.7% between 35-44 years old  
 7.5% between 55-64 years old  
 The margin of error was  $\pm 1.8\%$

27.3% between 25-34 years old  
 12.3% between 45-54 years old  
 5.2% over 65 years or did not specify