

# The Lebanese on the Eve of Presidential Elections:

The majority supports the two-thirds quorum. Respondents equally divided between Opposition, Pro-government forces and Independents

As President Emile Lahoud's tenure is coming to an end, Lebanon's politicians and *zu'ama* are in dispute over the identity of the new President.

*Information International* surveyed a sample of the Lebanese people (see sample p.11) on the presidential elections and other controversial issues.

## The Legal Quorum of the Presidential Elections Session

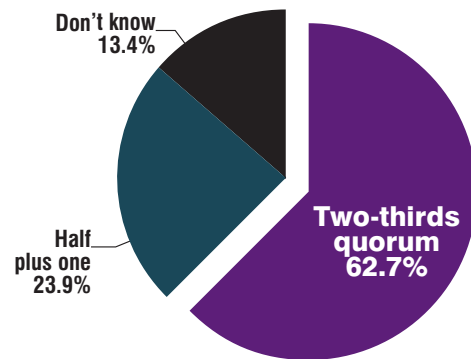
A major controversy emerged on the legal quorum of the elections session. Some politicians insist that the legal quorum is the two-thirds of deputies, while others say that it is the two-thirds in the first session and the half plus one in the consecutive sessions.

A majority of 62.7% of respondents say that the quorum is always the two-thirds, compared to 23.9% who believe that is the half plus one. 13.4% said "don't know". (Graph no.1)

When it comes to respondents' answers by confession, disparities are seen among the confessions: the overwhelming majority of Shia'a (88.4%) and a high percentage of Christians say that the two-thirds is the quorum, while the percentage decreases to 23.2% of the Druze and 38.4% of the Sunni.

Table no.1 shows the distribution of answers on the legal quorum by confession.

[Graph 1] In your opinion, what is the legal quorum of the presidential election session? (%)



Distribution of answers on the legal quorum by confession Table 1

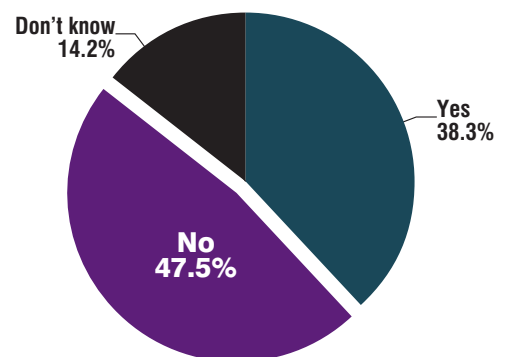
Confession	Maronite	Orthodox	Catholic	Sunni	Shia'a	Druze
Two-Thirds	64.4%	68.6%	73.1%	38.4%	88.4%	23.2%
Half + one	19.6%	15.1%	17.3%	45.1%	1.9%	66.1%
Don't know	16%	16.3%	9.6%	16.5%	9.7%	10.7%

Source: Information International – September 2007

## A President for Pro-Government Forces and Another for the Opposition

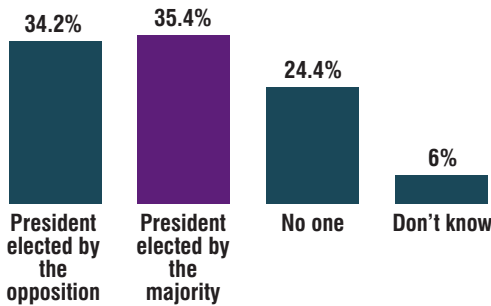
In case the President was elected by the half plus one of deputies, 47.5% say they will not acknowledge the elected president compared to 38.3% who will. 14.2% "don't know". (Graph no.2)

[Graph 2] Would you acknowledge a president elected by half the deputies plus one? (%)



However, in case the opposition elects its own candidate and pro-government forces do the same, 35.4% of respondents say they would support the pro-government president, compared to 34.2% who will back the opposition government. 30.4% "don't know" (Graph no.3). This means that the Lebanese are equally divided into three categories: pro-government supporters, opposition supporters and the Independents. Respondents' answers distributed by confession show that a majority of Shia'a (68.2%) support a president elected by the opposition, while the majority of Druze (78.6%) and Sunni (59.3%) support a president

[Graph 3] **If two presidents were elected, one by the opposition and the other by the majority, whom would you acknowledge? (%)**  
October 2007  
 Base: 1000



elected by the government forces. It is noteworthy that the percentage of Christians who support a pro-government president is higher than that of Christian respondents who support an opposition president. Table no.2 shows respondents' answers on the president's affiliation by confession.

**Respondents' answers on the president's affiliation by confession**  
 Table 2

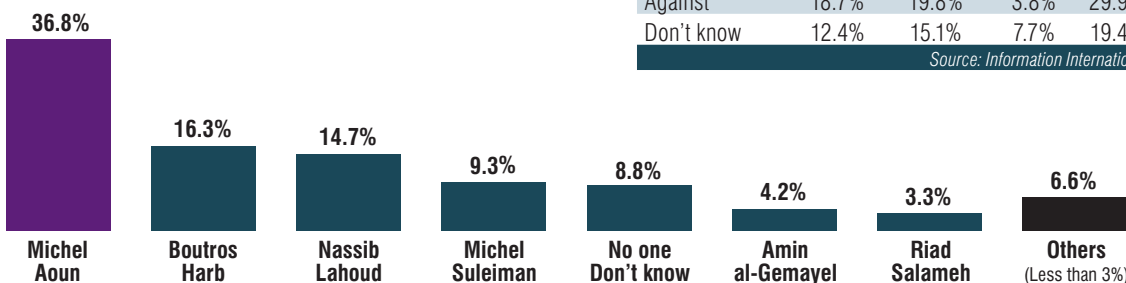
Position	Confession	Maronite	Orthodox	Catholic	Sunni	Shia'a	Druze
Supports the Opposition President		33.3%	25.6%	25%	11.9%	68.2%	1.8%
Supports the pro-government president		36.9%	38.4%	40.4%	59.3%	1.6%	78.6%
Neutral/Don't know		29.8%	36%	34.6%	28.8%	30.2%	19.6%

*Source: Information International – September 2007*

### Michel Aoun: Most Preferred Candidate

Despite the decline of Michel Aoun's popularity and the percentage of people supporting his candidacy, he remains the number one candidate to the majority of respondents (36.8%). Aoun is followed by Boutros Harb (16.3%), Nassib Lahoud (14.7%), Michel Suleiman (9.3%), Amin al-Gemayel (4.2%) and Riad Salameh (3.3%). 6.6% of respondents name other figures while 8.8% "don't know" or named "no one". (Graph no.4)

[Graph 4] **Who is your most preferred presidential candidate? (%)**  
October 2007  
 Base: 1000



In comparison with an opinion poll conducted by **Information International** from August 22-27, 2006, 45% supported Aoun, 10.9% Harb and 8.9% Nassib Lahoud.

When it comes to respondents' answers by confession, Aoun ranked first among the Shia'a (71.3%) and among the Maronites (40.4%). Harb ranked first among the Sunni (33.6%) and Nassib Lahoud occupied the top position among the Druze (50%).

Table no.3 shows respondents' position on their most preferred presidential candidate by confession.

**Respondents' answers on their most preferred presidential candidate by confession**  
 Table 3

Confession Candidate	Maronite	Orthodox	Catholic	Sunni	Shia'a	Druze
Michel Aoun	40.4%	29.1%	34.6%	9.3%	71.3%	3.6%
Boutros Harb	13.3%	15.1%	9.6%	33.6%	2.7%	26.8%
Nassib Lahoud	17.3%	18.6%	21.2%	17.9%	-	50%
Michel Suleiman	4.4%	7%	11.5%	10.1%	13.6%	1.8%
Amin al-Gemayel	5.8%	5.8%	7.7%	4.5%	-	5.4%
Riad Salameh	3.1%	2.3%	-	4.5%	3.5%	-
Others	8.6%	6.9%	3.9%	8.2%	3.4%	7%
Don't know/No one	7.1%	15.2%	11.5%	11.9%	5.5%	5.4%

*Source: Information International – September 2007*

### Nabih Berry's Initiative

On August 31, Speaker Nabih Berry launched an initiative to resolve the current deadlock, during the commemoration ceremony of the disappearance of Imam Moussa al-Sadr in Ba'albek. Berry suggested that the opposition relinquishes its demand for an extended national unity Cabinet in return of presidential elections based on consensus with a two-thirds quorum.

The majority of respondents (71.6%) say they support this initiative, compared to 17.2% who don't and 11.2% who "don't know".

Respondents' answers by confession are shown in Table no.4.

Table no.4 shows that while the overwhelming majority of Shia'a respondents support Berry's initiative, only half of Druze and Sunni respondents support it.

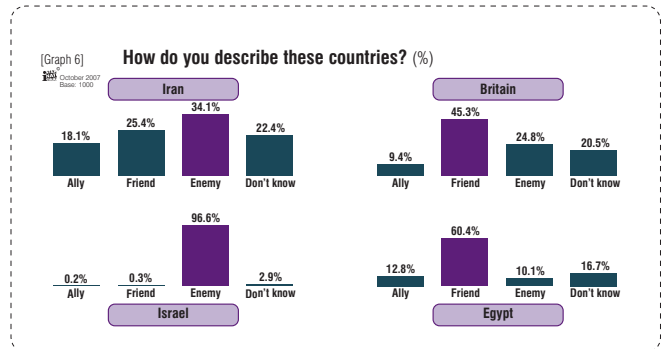
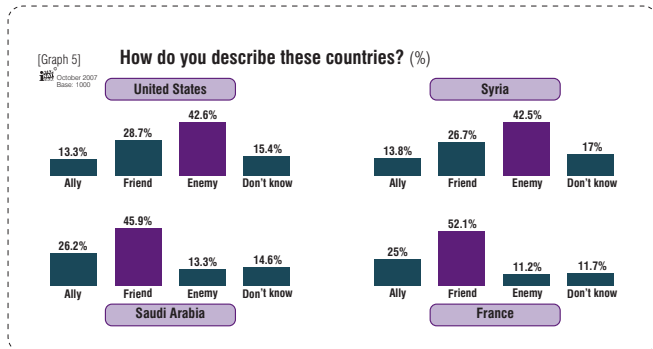
**Respondents' answers on Nabih Berry's initiative by confession**  
 Table 4

Confession Position	Maronite	Orthodox	Catholic	Sunni	Shia'a	Druze
With	68.9%	65.1%	88.5%	50.7%	97.3%	50%
Against	18.7%	19.8%	3.8%	29.9%	0.4%	39.3%
Don't know	12.4%	15.1%	7.7%	19.4%	2.3%	10.7%

*Source: Information International – September 2007*

## The Role of Foreign Countries: Allies, Enemies or Friends?

Many Arab and foreign countries play a role in Lebanon's affairs. Respondents' position on the role of these countries is shown in Graphs no.5-6.



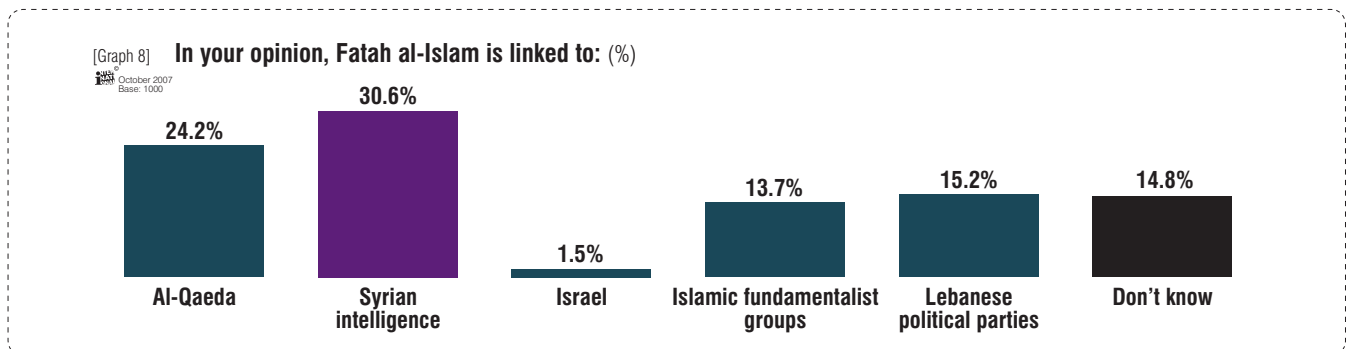
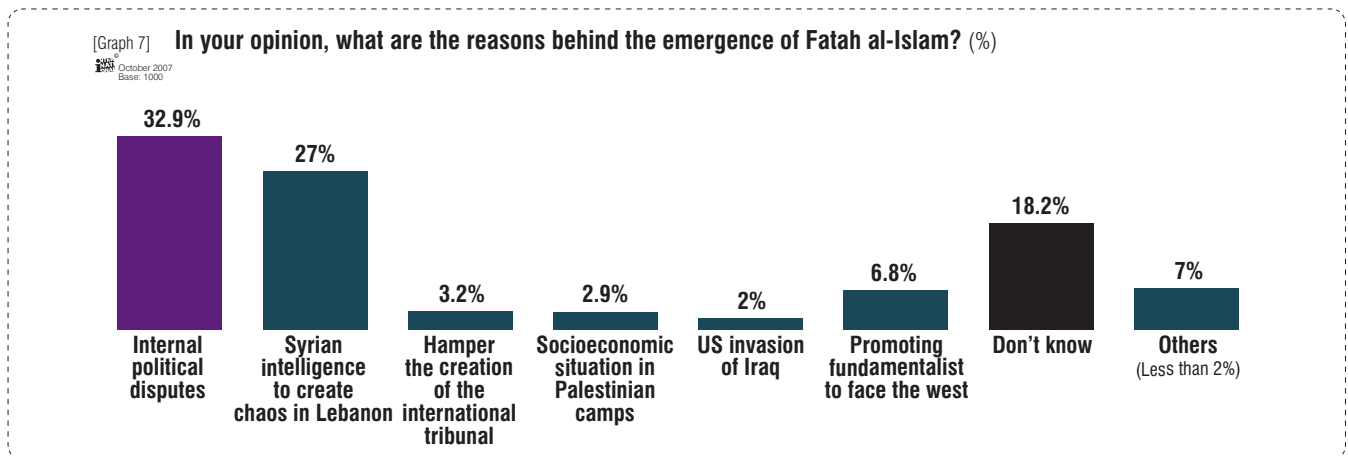
## Fatah al-Islam: Al-Qaeda or Syrian Intelligence

32.9% of respondents believe that Fatah al-Islam was the result of political disputes in Lebanon. 27% say the group was created by the Syrian intelligence to create chaos in the country, 6.8% to promote fundamentalism against the West and 3.2% to hamper the creation of an international tribunal.

2.9% of respondents said Fatah al-Islam was the result of the socioeconomic situation inside Palestinian camps, 2% the result of the US invasion of Iraq and 7% for other reasons. 18.2% "don't know" (Graph no.7).

Concerning the group's affiliations, 30.6% of respondents say it is linked to the Syrian intelligence, 37.9% with al-Qaeda and Islamic fundamentalist groups; 15.2% say it is affiliated to Lebanese political parties and 1.5% to Israel. 14.8% "don't know" (Graph no.8).

Out of the 15.2% of respondents who say that Fatah al-Islam was linked to Lebanese political parties, 48% "don't know" who is that party, 34.9% say the "Future Movement", 15.8% the "government" and 1.3% "all the parties".



## The Lebanese people and Optional Civil Marriage

The adoption of a law that allows optional civil marriage is seen by some observers as a step towards overcoming Lebanon's complex confessional system.

However, a high percentage of respondents (60.4%) are against this law compared to 35.6% who support it. 4% "don't know". Respondents' answers by confession are shown in Table no. 5.

In a comparison with a previous opinion poll conducted by **Information International** in February 2007, respondents' answers were as follows: 45.3% "against", 30.2% "with", 24.5% "don't know".

It is noteworthy that the percentage of respondents who are against optional civil marriage has increased by around 15%, while those who support it increased by 5% only. On the other hand, the percentage of people who "don't know" has significantly decreased by 83.3%.

**Respondents' answers on optional civil marriage by confession**  
Table 5

Confession Position	Maronite	Orthodox	Catholic	Sunni	Shia'a	Druze
With	60%	40.7%	67.4%	14.6%	22.5%	57.1%
Against	32%	55.8%	28.8%	81%	76%	41.1%
Don't know	8%	3.5%	3.8%	4.4%	1.5%	1.8%

Source: Information International – September 2007

## What's in the Results?

- 1- The majority of respondents (62.7%) say the legal quorum for the presidential election session is the two-thirds of deputies. However, when it comes to electing two presidents, one third of respondents support the president elected by the majority, another third supports the opposition president and an independent third supports "no one".  
It is also noteworthy that in each confession, one third of respondents support "no one", except for the Druze (only 19.6%)
- 2- Despite the decrease in the level of support to Aoun from 45% in August 2006 to 36.8% in September 2007, he remains the most supported candidate in the Lebanese arena with a big difference from the other preferred candidates. He also has a high percentage of support among the Maronites (40.4%).
- 3- Around the three-quarters of respondents (71.6%) support Berry's initiative to agree on a consensual candidate. However, the percentage was high among Shia'a and Christians and low among Sunni and Druze.
- 4- There are sharp divisions among the Lebanese on the role of foreign countries in Lebanon. The United States and Syria received almost the same percentages: 42% say the US is an ally and friend compared to 40.5% who say the same on Syria. On the other hand, 42.6% say the US is an enemy compared to 42.5% for Syria. Moreover, the Lebanese seem to agree that Israel is an enemy (96.6%).
- 5- 37.9% of respondents say that Fatah al-Islam is linked to Al-Qaeda or other Islamic fundamentalist groups. 30.6% say it is affiliated with the Syrian intelligence. ❁

### Description of the Sample

The opinion poll was conducted from September 19-25, 2007 on a sample of 1,000 Lebanese citizens distributed in the six Mohafaza and in confessions based on the electoral size of each. 56.1% were males and 43.9% females. Respondents were distributed in the different age and social categories.  
The margin of error was ± 1.2%

“Despite the decrease in the level of support to Aoun from 45% in August 2006 to 36.8% in September 2007, he remains the most supported candidate in the Lebanese arena with a big difference from the other preferred candidates.”