

Polling the Lebanese on Hariri's Assassination

On Monday February 14, 2005 at 12:55 p.m., a huge explosion targeted the convoy of Former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri while it was crossing the Saint Georges area.

Hariri was assassinated along with some of his guards and other civilians who work in the area or who were just passing by.

As a result, opinions, reactions and expectations varied. Who is responsible? Who is the primary beneficiary? Who should be handling the investigation? What is the relation between the assassination of Hariri and the situation in Iraq, or resolution 1559? How does it affect the political, economic, security and electoral situation?

Information International conducted an opinion poll on a sample of 1250 respondents in Lebanon during 19-24 February 2005.

Reaction Towards Hariri Assassination?

47.2% of respondents reported that the assassination of Prime Minister Hariri left them shocked, 32.6% were in deep grief, 16.8% angry, 2.8% did not feel anything and 0.6% experienced fear.

Did you expect such an incident?

68.2% of respondents reported that the occurrence of such incident was not expected at all, 15% never thought of it, compared to 15.4% said it was an expected incident, and 1.4% answered "Don't know".

Who is responsible/beneficiary of this incident?

Various parties were held responsible for the assassination of Former PM Hariri. Israel was on the top of the list with 23.9%, 15.3% for the US, 16.7% to both the Lebanese and the Syrian authorities together, 10.4% the Syrian authority only, 7% the Lebanese authority only. It is note worthy that Israel and the US were held responsible for the assassination by 39.2% of respondents compared to 34.1% who blamed the Lebanese and Syrian authorities.

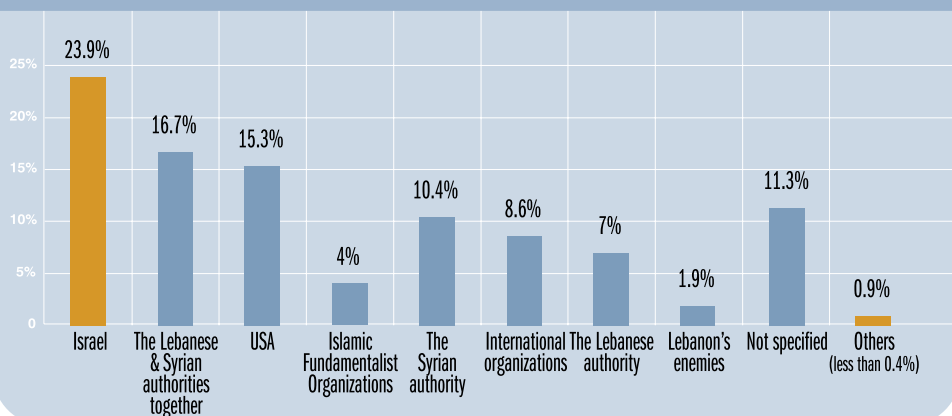
The remaining answers were distributed as follows: 8.6% blamed international organizations, 4% Islamic fundamentalist organizations, 1.9% Lebanon's enemies and 0.9% other parties, while 11.3% did not specify an answer for this question (Graph 1).

As for the beneficiaries from the assassination of Prime Minister Hariri, the answers were as follows: 28.7% reported that Israel as the primary beneficiary of this incident, followed by the Opposition (16.8%), USA (15.6%), the Lebanese authority (15.5%), the Syrian authority (10.6%), Lebanon's enemies (2.2%), and 0.3% for different other parties whereas 10.3% did not specify an answer for this question.

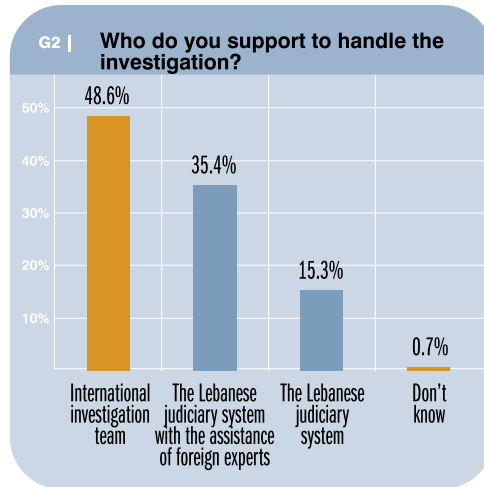
Who should handle the Investigation of the assassination of Hariri?

Attitudes concerning the party that should handle the investigation were split. 48.6% of the respondents supported the establishment of an international investigation committee, 35.4% for the Lebanese judiciary system along with foreign experts and 15.3% for the Lebanese judiciary system alone with 0.7% who responded by "Don't Know" (Graph 2).

G1 | Who is responsible for this incident?



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The distribution of results by confession shows that 73.5% of the Druze respondents support the establishment of an international investigation committee. The percentage drops for other confessions to reach 58.7% for the Maronite respondents, 52.6% for Sunni and 51.8% for Catholics. Orthodox respondents scored 40.5%, followed by Shiite 35.8%.

When asked about their expectations if an international investigation committee undertakes the investigation, 50.4% of respondents expect it to unveil the perpetrators compared to 18.7% who don't, 20.6% to blame a party other than the one that committed the crime, and 10.3% don't know.

Claiming Responsibility?

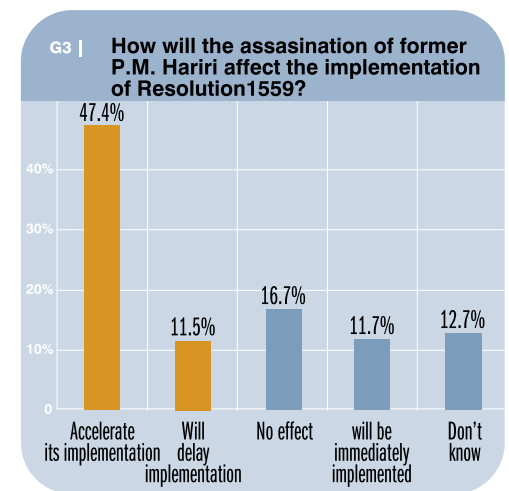
As soon as the assassination took place, one of the Arabic satellite channels broadcasted a video of someone claiming responsibility for the assassination. However, 76.8% of the respondents think this tape is fabricated to divert attention from the real perpetrator, 12.1% reported it may be a clue, 3.2% said it was real while 7.9% said they don't know.

Effects of Hariri Assassination

The assassination of Prime Minister Hariri will leave an impact on several sectors and issues in Lebanon, some of which are as follows:

On Resolution 1559

47.4% of respondents reported that the assassination of Prime Minister Hariri will accelerate the implementation of resolution 1559, compared to 11.5% who stated that it will delay it, 11.7% for its immediate implementation, 16.7% said it will not affect this resolution and 12.7% answered "Don't know" (Graph 3).

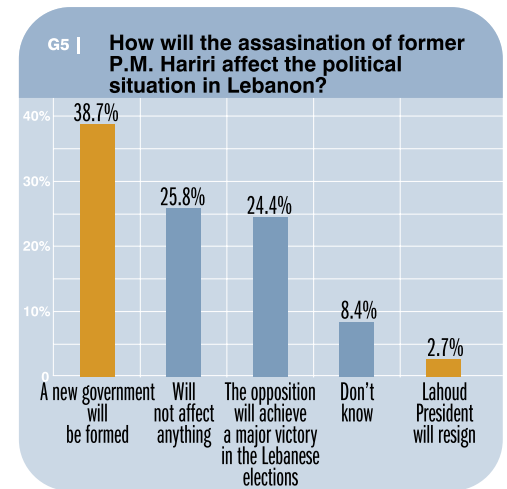
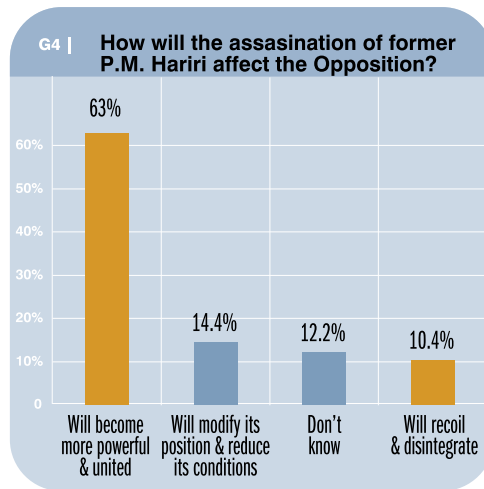


As for the insistence of the United States and France on the implementation of resolution 1559, this is directly related to several other issues that were viewed by the respondents as follows: 59.7% to the American-Syrian relations, 8.9% to the situation in Iraq, 5.8% to the Palestinian-Israeli relations, 1.5% to the situation in some Gulf countries and the problem of the Middle East in general, whereas 21.9% think that the insistence on executing resolution 1559 is directly related to the Lebanese situation and not to any formerly mentioned issues, and 2.2% answered "Don't know".

On the Opposition

The majority of respondents (63%) think that the assassination of Former Prime Minister Hariri will make the opposition more powerful and united, 10.4% reported that it will recoil and disintegrate, 14.4% it will modify its position and reduce its conditions and finally 12.2% answered "Don't Know" (Graph 4).

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On the Position of Deputy Walid Jumblatt

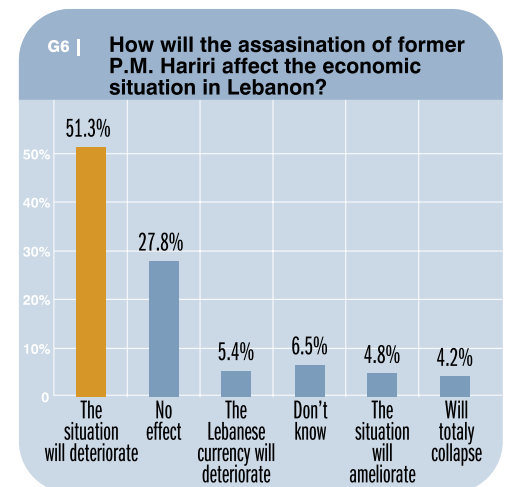
49% of respondents think that Jumblatt will continue with his positions and will not be affected by the assassination of Hariri, 16.3% reported that he will revert to his previous positions supporting Syria, 19.4% he will increase his alliances with the Christian opposition, 4.5% think he will leave the country and direct the opposition from abroad, 0.7% for other varying positions and 10.1% reported that they do not know.

On the Political Situation

38.7% of the respondents think that the assassination of Prime Minister Hariri will lead to the establishment of a new government (N.B. the government has resigned), 25.8% reported it will have no effect on the political situation, 24.4% for the opposition achieving a major victory in the upcoming parliamentary elections, 2.7% think that it will lead to the resignation of President Lahoud and 8.4% simply answered "Don't Know" (Graph 5).

On the Economic Situation

More than half of the respondents (51.3%) think that the assassination of Prime Minister Hariri will lead to the deterioration of the economic situation, 27.8% reported it will have no effect, 4.8% think the situation will ameliorate, 4.2% the economy will totally collapse, 5.4% the Lebanese currency will depreciate and 6.5% answered I don't know (Graph 6).



Poll results by confession show that the majority of the Shiite respondents (68.8%) expect the economic situation to deteriorate, followed by Sunni (57.2%) and Catholics (50%). Percentages drop notably for Maronite respondents (38.9%), Orthodox (36.2%) and the Druze (22.4%).

On the Security Situation

30.6% of respondents reported that the assassination of Hariri will lead to the deterioration of the security situation, 15.8% think that it will lead to other assassinations, 22.6% think it has no effect, whereas 24.6% reported that it will lead to the withdrawal of the Lebanese army from Lebanon and 6.4% simply "don't know".

Sample & Methodology

The survey, conducted between 19-24 February 2005, was based on a stratified random sample of 1250 respondents distributed on a national level. The gender distribution was as follows: 51.8% males and 48.2% females. In addition, respondents were distributed over the various age brackets as follows:
18.4% between 18-24 years
33.1% between 25-34 years
25.1% between 35-44 years
15.4% between 45-54 years
8% above the age of 55 years.
The refusal rate reached 5.4%.
The survey's margin of error was ±1.5%.

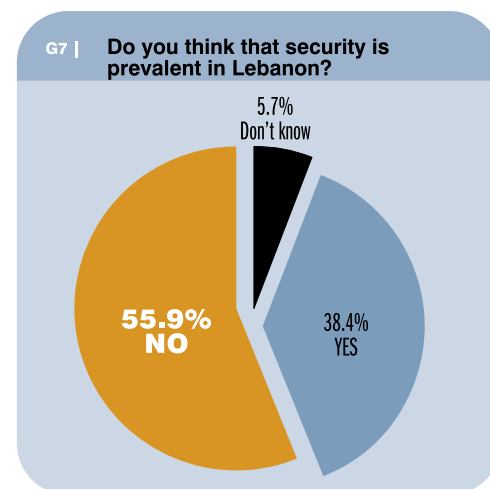
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The distribution of results by confession shows that the majority of Shiite respondents (57.7%) expect the deterioration of the security situation in the country after the assassination of P.M. Hariri. Percentages drop notably for other confessions to reach 26.2% for Sunni respondents, 21.4% for Catholics, 16.3% for Druze, 16.2% for Maronite and finally 12.9% for Orthodox respondents. When asked about the security situation in general, more than half of the respondents (55.9%) reported that security is not prevalent, as opposed to 38.4% who think it is and 5.7% reported "Don't Know" (Graph 7). Respondents who answered that security is not prevalent in the country had several options about which are the best solutions for security to prevail again.

Their answers are listed as follows: Reinforcement and deployment of the Lebanese army and security forces all over Lebanon (37.3%), Complete withdrawal of the Syrian army from Lebanon (36.2%), Disarmament of all armed forces in Lebanon (14.7%), bringing in international forces to implement security (5.7%), 2.8% for other measurements and 3.3% Don't Know.

On the Elections

Despite the assassination of Prime Minister Hariri, the majority of respondents (77.3%) support keeping the parliamentary elections at its set date (during April and May 2005), 14.2% for postponing the elections, 5.3% for conducting the elections prior to its set date and 3.2% answered Don't Know.



As for the voting attitude of the respondents and the effect of Hariri assassination on their positions, 39.6% reported that they have not decided previously nor have they decided yet, 31.1% will still vote for people close to Hariri as before, 17.6% will vote for people close to Hariri contrary to their previous position, 11% will keep their opposing position whereas 0.7% did not specify an answer (Graph 8).

Hariri and Lebanon after the Assassination

The poll results show that 32.1% of respondents supported Prime Minister Hariri and his plan for Lebanon and became more supportive after his assassination, 21.9% reported they were not concerned previously but are now supportive of his plan for Lebanon, 12.9% kept their opposing position despite their sadness. In addition, 13.2% reported that they were not and still are not concerned, 0.3% were not previously concerned but currently oppose his plan for Lebanon, and 19.6% answered Don't Know.

48.8% of respondents reported that their feeling about Lebanon's future shifted from security to worry and fear after the absence of Hariri, compared to 2.2% only who reported that their feelings shifted from worry and fear to security, 35% did not experience any change in their feelings: (8.3% were secure and still are, 26.7% were worried and still are). 14% answered "Don't Know".

G8 | How did former P.M. Hariri's assassination affect your election position?

