

THE ROLE OF DIASPORA IN COMBATING CORRUPTION IN LEBANON



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Introduction

The Lebanese Diaspora is notoriously famous for its worldwide spread across the globe. The fragile nature of the country led to a great number of migration waves², since it was an Ottoman territory until today's acute brain drain due to the heavy deterioration of the social and economic situation. This is much reflected in the Lebanese emigration literature; as such, emigration scholars Jennifer Skulte-Ouaiss and Paul Tabar write in 2014 how "Lebanon has long reflected a dual nature of economic and social vibrancy as well as chronic conflict and periodic economic crisis, resulting in a large diaspora"³. Punctuated by conflicts (1860, 1915, 1975, 2006...), the build-up of the Lebanese diaspora presents a "singular physiognomy", as characterized by Amir Abdulkarim⁴, with a combination of "push and pull" factors, especially when diaspora members continue to be drawn to the Lebanese situation despite the uprooting they had to endure.

No official figures exist to account for the exact number of diaspora members for the Lebanese community, ranging from 1.5 million to 16 million persons⁵, disseminated across the globe, from America, Latin America, Australia, Europe, Africa and the Gulf countries. Among the factors lies the large variety of situations related to what can constitute diaspora communities: emigrants (descendants of those established abroad often more than a century ago), expatriates (economically active persons established abroad with close family ties to the homeland), migrants (among which those trying to reach Europe through illegal routes).

Diaspora members are difficult to pin down in a single category of persons. The relationship to the home country is also extremely volatile, descendants of emigrants can be found very much involved where recent expatriates prefer to take more distance with the country which ruined their lives, namely due to its unchecked corruption. As depicted by the Executive Magazine "the lack of opportunity, combined with the financial failure of the state and the banks, has led to unprecedented brain drain"⁶.

It is not an overstatement to say that "corruption has permeated all aspects of Lebanese society"⁷, as described in the same special issue of the magazine. The latter features how

"international research into corruption indicates that grand and petty corruption—meaning incidents involving large spending measures on a national and sub-national level as well as citizens' inability to obtain services without 'greasing the wheels' when dealing with public servants—can significantly distort economic performances at the national as well as individual level [...] Sadly, until now, very little has been done, and the August 4 Beirut Port explosion has appeared as proof of this corrupt system"⁸.

This is the context under which the Lebanese Transparency Associate (LTA) has commissioned this independent study, aimed at grasping at the role (actual and potential) present diaspora groups, taken from a "civil society" standpoint, are or could be playing in the struggle against corruption in the country. The methodology was based on desk research covering the concept of "diaspora politics" and "diaspora in international relations", which literature review helped determine the theoretical framework of this research. On the other hand, desk research also featured a preliminary mapping of present efforts of diaspora groups in some countries, as the study was not intended to provide a full mapping of all diaspora communities and their action towards Lebanon.

Additionally, a small sample of representatives of some diaspora groups and networks were contacted inviting them to participate in an interview for the purpose of this study. Out of 15 groups contacted, five responded favorably, agreeing to meet, over Zoom or in person (in Paris), to discuss the different aspects of diaspora and anti-corruption in Lebanon. Table 1 hereunder lists the organizations which feedback was collected for the purpose of this study. The interviews were conducted under Chatham House rule, i.e. while being formally listed as respondents, the groups' ideas and responses are not directly traced back to them. This allowed for the representatives to freely speak their mind in the course of the discussions. Moreover, many ideas discussed dealing with this study do not necessarily represent the groups' stands as many do not have a formal action plan dedicated to tackling corruption, so these key informant interviews are closer to brainstorming sessions rather than a faithful rendering of each group's agenda on tackling corruption in their home country. On the other hand, respondents will only be referred to nominatively when they are addressing an issue directly involving any of their group's activities.

Table 1: List of respondents from Lebanese diaspora groups and networks

<i>Group</i>	<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Format</i>
مواطنون لبنانيون حول العالم Mouvement des citoyens libanais du monde - MCLM	Elian Sarkis Co-founder, Paris	October 2022 17	Remote (Whatsapp)
مغتربين مجتمعيين - Meghterbin Mejtemiin	Marc Tueni Co-founder, Paris	October 2022 20	In person (Paris)
LIFE beyond borders (Lebanese International Finance Executives)	Tony Al Hoyek Coordinator of Advocate pillar, London	October 2022 21	Remote (Zoom)
SEAL-USA	Norma Haddad Executive Director, New York	October 2022 21	Remote (Zoom)
The Lebanese Diaspora Network (TLDN)	Nancy Stephan Co-founder, Bucharest	November 2022 3	Remote (Zoom)

The fact that one organization among those contacted declined to discuss the subject matter, stating their group to be “apolitical and does not get involved in your topic of interest”⁹, gives a first indication as to how sensitive the issue can be. Often, Lebanese diaspora groups, dedicating themselves to charity and humanitarian support, do not necessarily wish to push the involvement to the policy / political levels, under which combating corruption falls under.

This prompts the first highlight of this journey, looking into the traditional role Lebanese diaspora groups have given themselves. Historically, a tremendous number of groups were getting involved in mainly supporting the development of Lebanese economic sectors, before other types of

⁹ Response received by email on October 11th, 2022.

engagement started to emerge as the sociopolitical situation in Lebanon was transforming during the decade after the assassination of Rafik Hariri and the withdrawal of the Syrian army from the Lebanese territory in 2005

Section I: The Turning Point of the Lebanese Diaspora

A. Diaspora's traditional economic and financial involvement

Diasporas are defined as “any ethnocultural community spread outside its original environment or an ethnocultural entity originally constituted prior to its dissemination”.¹⁰ This paper will not enter in the complex rhetorical debate over the difficult definition which could draw a line between “migration” and “diaspora”, or between “minority” and “diaspora”.

Under the present approach, the Lebanese diaspora groups are those that define themselves as part of the Lebanese ethnos and are quite actively involved in supporting one or more sectors in the home country in addition to maintaining strong social ties there. Furthermore, this study focuses on the groups and networks acting on the “civil society” umbrella.

According to Jennifer Skulte-Ouaiss and Paul Tabar, this “diaspora has long retained and/or rebuilt ties to the homeland, using hard earned economic and social capital to try to ‘build’ the Lebanon”.¹¹ Indeed, regardless of their country of residence, the members and groups of the Lebanese diaspora have been traditionally playing a prominent role to reconstruct the social and economic tissue of the country.

It is hence mainly through business and away from politics, seen as sectarian and divisive, that the diaspora will traditionally engage its efforts and capital in their home country. During a conference of EUROMED Migration IV in 2016, Abdallah Jabbour from the Lebanon for Entrepreneurs (LFE) depicted the Lebanese diaspora as a “gold mine of 16 million”.¹²

Regardless of the non-partisanship of large segments of the Lebanese diaspora, this rationale was always supported by the Lebanese authorities, which Ministry of Foreign Affairs eventually became the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigration. In 2003, the “Emigrants’ Statue” was erected next to the Beirut harbor, as a donation by the Centro Libanés of Mexico City to the Beirut Municipality. It represents the copy of the work of the sculptor of Lebanese origin Ramiz Barakat which he created in 1979 and exhibited in Mexico City.

Founder of the World Cultural Lebanese Union, Ambassador Chucri Abboud is often quoted saying that “emigration is a natural phenomenon for Lebanese”.¹³ Maintaining social ties across the globe with the Lebanese diaspora (whether formal nationals or descendants) hence forms a great

¹⁰ Definition by Pierre George, quoted by Martine Hovanessian (1998) « La notion de diaspora, usages et champ sémantique », *Journal des anthropologues*, p. 1 [translation by author].

¹¹ Jennifer Skulte-Ouaiss, Paul Tabar (2014). *Strong in Their Weakness or Weak in Their Strength? The Case of Lebanese Diaspora Engagement with Lebanon, Immigrants & Minorities: Historical Studies in Ethnicity, Migration and Diaspora*, p. 2.

¹² YouTube (2016). “A gold mine of 16 million: how engaging the diaspora can turn Lebanon into an entrepreneurship hub”, ICMPD, posted on 31 May 2016, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nOYdvHbWeKw&list=WL&index=26>.

¹³ Quoted by Daniel Meier (2016). *Liban : identités, pouvoirs et conflits, idées reçues sur un Etat dans la tourmente*, Le Cavalier Bleu, p. 51 [Translation by researcher]

strategic asset for the Lebanese State, in terms of alleviating the social injustices its policies had nurtured.

As explained by Adamson, “Mobilized diaspora populations can also be used to promote a nation’s interests abroad. States can enhance and extend their power by courting diaspora organizations and encouraging them to engage in lobbying and public diplomacy—a post-modern form of traditional power politics”.¹⁴

REMITTANCES

Among the instruments sustaining the Lebanese social and consumption needs, the most important lies in the flow of remittances sent by the diaspora to Lebanon, which constitutes a strong and historic constant at this level. According to the World Bank, the remittance inflows for Lebanon reached as high as \$7.9 billion in 2017.¹⁵ As analyzed by the Policy Initiative in a July 2022 report:

“[B]etween 2011 and 2020, the size of remittances ranged from \$6 billion to \$7 billion per year. These inflows accounted for a large part of national income, and more so today. Well before the crisis, families who were lucky enough to receive remittances found them to be an important resource to access vital services and goods, such as food (61%), housing (59%), human capital investments in healthcare (46%) and education (18%). Also, these remittances helped finance Lebanon’s expensive import bill, which amounted to \$194 billion, or 49% of all foreign currency outflows, during the past decade alone”.¹⁶

In 2020, Lebanon ranked 12th worldwide in terms of remittances received per GDP¹⁷, with a rate that passed from 12.7% in 2018 to 25.6% in 2020¹⁸. This mobilization of a financial nature has been greatly supporting households and families in Lebanon. In extenso, it was also nourishing the banking sector and other financial institutions, which managed to capture the interest of large segments of the diaspora into investing in the country mainly in the real estate sector, in addition to generously remunerating deposit accounts, before the Ponzi scheme was uncovered and eventually collapsed.

BUSINESS “ANGELISM”

“Invest Lebanon” designates a very prominent feature of the diaspora engagement in its effort to boost its job market, economic advantages, business opportunities or supporting particular sectors that are deemed essential to the sustainable development of the Lebanese economy.

Such efforts are depicted as non-political, non-sectarian by most diaspora groups that believe in engaging with all the relevant parties, be it from the public or private sectors in the country, to ensure the success of their initiatives, be it ministries, chambers of industry and commerce, specialized councils such the Council for Reconstruction and Development, IDAL¹⁹ etc. Large gatherings are regularly organized in Lebanon by multiple coalitions to connect diaspora members from the

¹⁴ Fiona B. Adamson (2016). “The Growing Importance of Diaspora Politics”, Current History, November 2016, Vol. 115, No. 784, A World of Diasporas, November 2016, p. 294.

¹⁵ World Bank, “Lebanon Country Report 2017”, the World Bank Data, 2017, available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/country/lebanon?view=chart>

¹⁶ Hussein Cheaito, Sami Zoughaib (2022). Tourism and remittances are not a panacea for Lebanon’s financial woes, The Policy Initiative, July 2022, available at <https://www.thepolicyinitiative.org/article/details/177/tourism-and-remittances-are-not-a-panacea-for-lebanons-financial-woes>

¹⁷ BlomInvest Bank (2021). Lebanon Ranked 12th Worldwide in Remittances Received per GDP, 6 September 2021, available at <https://blog.blominvestbank.com/41452/lebanon-ranked-12th-worldwide-in-remittance-received-per-gdp/>

¹⁸ The World Bank. Personal remittances, received (% of GDP) – Lebanon (2002-2020), available at <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS?locations=LB>

¹⁹ IDAL: Investment Development Authority of Lebanon, a national investment promotion agency.

business world to formal institutions, banks and corporations inside the country. Planet Lebanon, the Lebanese Diaspora Energy and other bilateral business forums are just some of the illustrations of the intense collaboration to draw business opportunities and investments to the country.

With the digital revolution reaching Lebanon, many of the efforts were promoting a “Silicon Wadi” for the country, inspired by the Silicon Valley in the US, hoping to establish a tech hub in Lebanon in the areas of the New Information and Communication Technologies, that would create jobs in the homeland and propel the country as top market for IT development.

As such, many diaspora groups which members are part of the business universe, are pioneering and engaging in a wide variety of actions oriented at developing the country’s national economy: be it consolidate entrepreneurship, support new businesses in securing new markets, transfer knowledge and expertise to support export activities, nurture start-ups and SMEs etc.

CARING AND PROMOTING

In addition to “Investing”, two other prominent pillars of the large diaspora support to their fellow citizens back home can also be formulated: Caring for Lebanon and Promoting its Richness.

Under the “caring” category, one can encounter the extensive networks of charity and humanitarian efforts, even before the Beirut Blast (see section I-B). It is impossible to hold a comprehensive record of the different donation programs organized by hundreds of Lebanese diaspora groups across the globe, whether targeting impoverished communities, specific regions and villages, supporting charity associations and other civil society organizations dedicated in humanitarian action. It is not possible to list all the past or current initiatives of this sort, but a couple of recent examples can be stated here:

- Lebnet’s “ALEB (heart) Lebanon”, a pilot program launched in December 2020 in partnership with Al Majmoua to “support the Lebanese population living below the poverty line through sustained remittances on a family-to-family basis”. This fundraising program managed to sponsor 47 families through regular transfers in “fresh” US dollars.²⁰
- “Help feed a Lebanese family” program launched in April 2020 by SEAL USA²¹, which fundraiser ambitions to lessen the effects of hunger among the most vulnerable people in Lebanon.²²

But the most prominent mobilization naturally came in the aftermath of the Beirut Blast on 4th August 2022. Shocked and shaken by this new blow on their fellow citizens back home, the diaspora immediately rallied support and was tremendously active in conveying all what was needed to alleviate the suffering at hand. A Beirut Emergency Funds, managed by LIFE Lebanon, SEAL USA, LebNet, Jamhour Alumni, and the non-governmental US-based Kuwait-America Foundation, raised 8.4 million dollars. As detailed in LIFE’s annual report, the fund “allowed us to support 24 NGOs and 5 hospitals. In total, these funds benefited over 38,000 individuals, helped

²⁰ LEBNET. How Aleb Lebanon Impacted the Lives of Families in Need, 29 March 2021, available at <https://lebnet.us/profiles/10248722>

²¹ SEAL: Social Economic Action for Lebanon.

²² SEAL USA, Help feed a Lebanese Family, available at <https://mailchi.mp/seal-usa/seal-fall-newsletter-seal-supports-beneficiaries-and-launches-feed-the-hungry-initiative-726323>

rehabilitate 1,416 homes and 292 SMEs, and provided mental health support to 6,364 beneficiaries”²³

The Lebanese Diaspora Network (TLDN) initiated its own humanitarian aid program mainly through the provision of glass to replace the shattered windows by the explosion. It also sent anti-tetanus injections for the thousands of wounded and supported patients in need of special medical care.²⁴

With the electricity crisis, financial aid has even taken a new turn with the provision of alternative sources of energy. For instance, in September 2022, volunteers managed to raise 100.000 euros from Lebanese expatriates originating from Tula, in order to build a solar farm with 185 panels to be located on the local church’s grounds and benefit the inhabitants.²⁵

Other forms of targeted cooperation can also be observed, such as the support of locating the remains of those who perished at sea in Northern Lebanon when their vessel sank as they were trying to flee the country and a life of despair. MP Ashraf Rifi resorted mainly to Lebanese diaspora members living in Australia to rent the submarine that was mobilized for the search, for a cost of 251.000\$ for a week’s mission.²⁶

More generally, the actions to care for the Lebanese back home come through a heavy support to both the health and education needs of the underprivileged Lebanese. Moved by the ambition to sustain a vibrant medical sector while also benefiting to all social classes in Lebanon, many diaspora groups have specialized in the medical sector and the health needs of the country, such as the International Lebanese Medical Association or Doctors for Lebanon Diaspora, and many others we cannot exhaustively list here.

On the education level, an extensive mobilization can also be observed by a large number of groups wishing to offer scholarships in addition to studies opportunities in Lebanon and abroad to participate to the success of what is often considered as the greatest asset of the country: its human resources., namely educating and “nurturing” the skills of its youth. As such, LIFE Lebanon and LEBNET, among others, use the “nurture” rhetoric in their action plans, in their efforts of supporting students, but also educational facilities, be it public or private schools or universities.

The “Promoting” pillar brings the diaspora to convey the beauty of many of their roots’ aspects, such as the culture, the environment, national heritage in addition to the promotion of local development. As such, many diaspora groups organize to fundraise, network or share expertise on how to preserve the sustainability of local wealth from a cultural or environmental perspective. One can observe the numerous campaigns for planting cedar trees²⁷, funding natural reserves, nurturing local artisans of traditional soap²⁸, promoting local cultural landmarks... it is once again impossible to list the tremendous efforts initiated by the various diaspora members across the globe at such level.

²³ LIFE Lebanon (2021). Annual Review 2021, p. 3, available at <https://lifelebanon.com/storage/pdfs/c878498f8b6650a284c8964f88be95b3.pdf>.

²⁴ Key Informant Interview with Nancy Stephan, The Lebanese Diaspora Network, 3 November 2022 over Zoom.

²⁵ AFP (2022). Les Libanais s’orientent vers l’énergie solaire, une « nécessité » avec la crise, 11 September 2022, available at <https://www.connaissancedesenergies.org/afp/les-libanais-sorientent-vers-lenergie-solaire-une-necessite-avec-la-crise-220911>

²⁶ L’Orient-Le Jour (2022). Un sous-marin est arrivé hier à Beyrouth pour extraire les corps des victimes, 18 August 2022, available at <https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1308769/un-sous-marin-est-arrive-hier-a-beyrouth-pour-extraire-les-corps-des-victimes.html>

²⁷ Cf. for instance: USAID and Ministry of Foreign Affairs Engage Diaspora in a Planting Day to Demonstrate Long-Term Commitment to a Greener Lebanon, 7 May 2017, available at <https://project.lri-lb.org/news.php?t=17&i=262#news&panel1-1>

²⁸ Cf. for instance : Ophélie Julien-Laferrère, SEAL : 20 ans d’action pour l’émancipation des femmes en zones rurales, L’Orient Le Jour, 9 August 2017, available at <https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1066366/seal-20-ans-daction-pour-lemancipation-des-femmes-en-zones-rurales.html>

That said, this rich engagement onto Lebanese human and economic development, however successful projects and programs, has not been able to stir the country away from jumping off the cliff of the crumbling era it has recently entered. Diasporas, notes Hazel Smith “are not powerless victims of circumstances because they have agency (i.e. capacity), however limited”.²⁹ Even on past studies directly focusing on Lebanon, experts had already observed how “despite its renowned strength, the Lebanese Diaspora has not been able to affect change in the sectarian nature of Lebanese homeland politics nor in the too often replicated sectarian politics in the diaspora”.³⁰ As such, “the ‘strong’ Lebanese Diaspora remains too ‘weak’ to affect significant change in its homeland”.³¹

However, since 2015 and the waste crisis in the country, there has been tremendous civil movement, which had extended to the diaspora, through the media and the heavy use of social media networks. This triggered the start of what can be considered a genuine breaking point towards greater political mobilization at the hands of the Lebanese diaspora.

B. The turn towards political mobilization

Diaspora experts agree on the tendencies of such groups to often export their ideologies and disputes with them to their new countries of residence. In the Lebanese context, the diaspora isn’t free from sectarianism and fragmentation, as a part of the emigrants and expatriates form organized ranks of partisans of the ruling parties in all parts of the world. As noted by Skulte-Ouaiss & Tabar, part of the Lebanese diaspora “often unquestionably supporting the major political parties and other Lebanese Diaspora-homeland organisations whose ultimate aim is to serve their respective communal interests”.³²

With the emergence of the “You Stink” movement in 2015 and other similar grassroots coalitions rising against the corruption and incompetence of the governing parties, many diaspora members, thus groups, have started joining ranks to participate in the national protest dynamics and supporting the call for reforms towards good governance and accountability. This interest will become even more tangible during the municipal elections as Beirut Madinati emerged as a new political campaign, presenting independent candidates with integrity to run for local office. These dynamics captured a large interest among diaspora groups which contributed in funding the campaign and supporting its communications efforts. The context under which these municipal elections were occurring also consolidated a growing civil interest in political participation, both inside and outside Lebanon, since these were the only opportunity for voters to express themselves given the parliamentary elections had been postponed since the last ballot in 2009.

General elections would be called only in 2018, only to attract more interest from diaspora members and groups, because in the meantime, the electoral law had been amended in September 2017. For the time ever, Lebanese residing outside Lebanon could register to participate in

²⁹ Hazel Smith, ‘Diasporas in International Conflict’, in Smith and Stares (eds.), *Diasporas in Conflict*, United Nations University Press, 2007, p.15

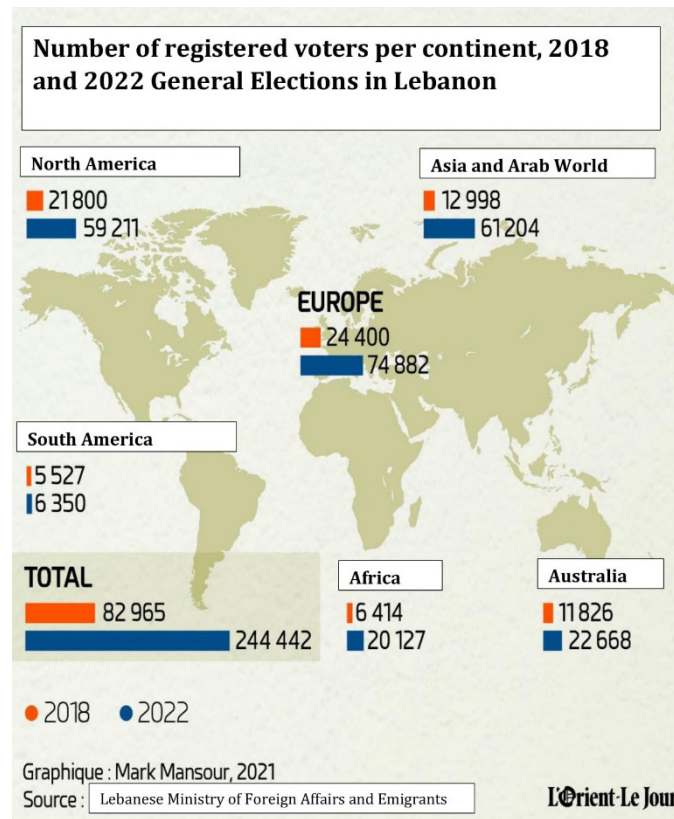
³⁰ Jennifer Skulte-Ouaiss, Paul Tabar (2014). *Strong in Their Weakness or Weak in Their Strength? The Case of Lebanese Diaspora Engagement with Lebanon*, *Immigrants & Minorities: Historical Studies in Ethnicity, Migration and Diaspora*, p. 1.

³¹ Jennifer Skulte-Ouaiss, Paul Tabar (2014). *Strong in Their Weakness or Weak in Their Strength? The Case of Lebanese Diaspora Engagement with Lebanon*, *Immigrants & Minorities: Historical Studies in Ethnicity, Migration and Diaspora*, p. 20.

³² Jennifer Skulte-Ouaiss, Paul Tabar (2014). *Strong in Their Weakness or Weak in Their Strength? The Case of Lebanese Diaspora Engagement with Lebanon*, *Immigrants & Minorities: Historical Studies in Ethnicity, Migration and Diaspora*, p. 3

parliamentary elections. The law originally stipulated that 6 new MPs would be added to the 128 elected officials in Parliament to represent the Lebanese diaspora. However, this clause was suspended and the Lebanese government decided to open the diaspora votes to be counted within each voter's original district, the same way Lebanese residents are attached to vote in their caza of origin.

Graph 1 – source: L'Orient-Le Jour



Hence, both the 2018 and 2022 general elections allowed for a diaspora vote, widening furthermore the window of opportunity for the diaspora to get more involved in matters of political participation (see graph 1 above). In 2018, 82,970 voters in 40 countries were registered on the diaspora's electoral lists during a six-week registration process. As shown in the above graph, the numbers skyrocket in 2022 with 244,442 registrations abroad, showing an ever-growing engagement for civil and political affairs as Lebanon's economy and financial sectors collapsed, with excruciating consequences for the population.

Various factors explain the tripling of the mobilization. On one hand, the thawra (uprising) of 17 October 2019 mobilized the diaspora "like never before"³³ with the establishment of multiple movements, groups and organizations during and the aftermath of the weeks that led to thousands of protestors to take and seize many strategic roads and plazas throughout the country. On the other hand, many diaspora groups engaged in campaigning to promote voters' registration for Lebanese residing abroad, by disseminating the registration process, while offering to facilitate the paperwork. This tremendous mobilization in the different hotspots of the Lebanese diaspora led to this large leap in numbers, with a multiplying factor as high as 4.7 in the Arab world and as high as three in Africa and Europe and North America.

³³ Quote by a Key Informant

Mobilized for the first time in its history, the Lebanese diaspora showed up in significant proportions to the polling stations, in comparison with their fellow citizens back home, during both elections when they could cast their votes. Graph 2 below shows how turnout of the diaspora's vote in both 2018 and 2022 was much higher than in Lebanon across all districts.

Source: Lebanese Ministry of Interior and Municipalities

And while the turnout receded from one election to the other inside the country, the diaspora on the other hand featured an imposing increase in their share of the votes passing from close to 47,000 votes in 2018 to around 144,000 in 2022, representing a 306% spike. As a result, 13 MPs from "forces of change (qiwa at-taghyir)"³⁴ were elected across several districts³⁵, compared to just one seat in 2018. As pointed out by one of the respondents, "without the diaspora, we wouldn't have 13 MPs today, this was the result of a huge push and huge work on the grounds".³⁶

The tipping point for this massive mobilization coming from the diaspora is the uprising of 17 October, 2019. According to one respondent, it is after this date that the "diaspora imposed itself"³⁷ in the electoral space. The Lebanese Diaspora Network (TLDN), which was founded in the aftermath of the 17 October thawra, launched several campaigns connected to the 2022 elections. For starters, the TLDN rejected the disposition that stipulates for the diaspora vote to be represented in 6 new MPs. On this, a joint initiative with a Lebanese advocacy group "Kulluna Irada" called the Lebanese expatriates "to exercise their full democratic right of electing their deputies based on their place of registration".³⁸ As such, the campaign urged "expatriates who refuse the discriminatory 6 seats assigned by continent/confession [...] to address their local Lebanese mission with the below letter"³⁹, which was attached to all communications material.

Additionally, several groups further campaigned for residents abroad to massively register in their nearest Lebanese consulate. TLDN engaged in networking and coordination activities to inform the public abroad on registration procedures and even offered support in terms of processing the different formalities, whether in their place of residence or in Lebanon, such as retrieving formal identification documents needed for the registration. Impact Lebanon, a UK based diaspora group launched an online platform, Sawti (my voice)⁴⁰, "designed to inform and support the Lebanese people around the world to participate in Lebanon's elections".⁴¹ The initiative was very successful, namely in the UK where the group is well implanted.⁴²

This platform, along with other initiatives also provided information about alternative political parties in a non-partisan way based on a set of criteria, allowing Lebanese citizens to make their own informed decisions. As such, TLDN conducted 52 webinars to promote alternative lists and faces, some of whom are now MPs, in order to introduce them to expatriates. It went even further by "creating electoral makanet",⁴³ i.e. operational teams in support of these independent lists.

³⁴ As characterized by DRI, cf. Makram Rabah (2022). Lebanon's Parliamentary Elections: A Fragile Step in the Right Direction, Democracy Reporting International, Political Analysis, June 2022, available at <https://democracyreporting.s3.eu-central-1.amazonaws.com/images/62a737d7b18ab.pdf>.

³⁵ Cf. Salah Hijazi (2022). How the Lebanese diaspora voted in constituencies where it carries the most weight, L'Orient Today, 24 May 2022, available at <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1300590/how-the-lebanese-diaspora-voted-in-constituencies-where-it-carries-the-most-weight.html>

³⁶ Quote by a Key Informant.

³⁷ Quote by a Key Informant.

³⁸ "Same Nationality, Same Right Campaign" webpage. Expats right to vote, 2022 elections, Kulluna Irada, available at <https://kulluna-irada.org/diaspora>

³⁹ Idem.

⁴⁰ "Sawti - your voice, your vote" webpage, IMPACT Lebanon, available at <https://www.impactlebanon.org/initiatives/sawti-your-voice-your-vote?event=false>.

⁴¹ Idem.

⁴² Cf. Jeanine Jalkh (2022). La ferveur électorale de la diaspora aura-t-elle un effet contagieux ? L'Orient-Le Jour, 10 May 2022, available at <https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1298950/la-fevereur-electorale-de-la-diaspora-aura-t-elle-un-effet-contagieux.html>

⁴³ Key Informant Interview with Nancy Stephan, The Lebanese Diaspora Network, 3 November 2022 over Zoom.

As the past decade witnessed growing activism over public issues and rejecting the political class dysfunctions and inefficiency, the development of such activities constituted a turning point in the diaspora's traditional involvement in their home country's affairs. With the 2019 uprising, a growing number of groups have decided to "cross the Rubicon" and invest the arena of political participation and electoral change and turning the diaspora votes against sectarian and traditional parties. Diaspora groups joining the political umbrella see themselves as agent for change and many have already started targeting the rampant level of corruption of their home country.

Section II: The Lebanese Diaspora as Agent for Change: Towards an Anti-Corruption Agenda?

A. Perception upon combating Lebanese endemic corruption

Any literature review regarding anti-corruption agendas and planning in Lebanon will reach the same conclusion: the absence of references to the Lebanese diaspora, as if there is little the latter can actually accomplish on that front. Foremost, the Lebanese National Anti-Corruption Strategy, the formal blueprint in planning how to eradicate corruption in the country, is silent on diaspora involvement. The document states its "vision has been formulated to express the aspirations of the Lebanese people, both in Lebanon and abroad, to build a prosperous society with sustainable development standards, and a democratic country embracing the principles of good governance".⁴⁴ Invoking the aspiration of the expatriates "abroad" appears as the unique reference to the Lebanese diaspora, lacking any concrete and tangible action in the formulation of the different policy orientations.

Furthermore, the Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (3RF), developed in the aftermath of the Port explosion, acknowledges the role of the expatriates in the humanitarian response, yet limiting it to its traditional fundraising aspect and failing to associate them further to the reform agenda:

"[t]he Lebanese diaspora has also been active in the response, remitting funds to family members, and in some cases returning to Beirut to help in the clean-up and repair efforts. Alongside all this, local crowdsourcing efforts have been put in place, both independently and through Lebanese NGOs, CSOs, and businesses"⁴⁵.

One factor explaining the quasi-absence of the diaspora resources in the policy debates could be the geographical distance from the local context: as depicted by one respondent, "we [the expatriates] are always told that 'you are not living here, how would you know?'"⁴⁶, insinuating such distance would remove the credibility of diaspora actors in talking about national public policies. Another response pointed to the fact that "we [the expatriates] don't live there, we are not involved in all that [policy agenda], we are not on the ground, and many other groups are better geared to campaign public opinion".⁴⁷ As stated in the introduction, one of the groups approached for this study openly declined to partake in the interview, claiming their group to be "apolitical and

⁴⁴ Republic of Lebanon, The National Anti-Corruption Strategy, 2020-2025, p. 28.

⁴⁵ World Bank (2020). Lebanon Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (3RF), December 2020, p. 66.

⁴⁶ Quote by a Key Informant

⁴⁷ Quote by a Key Informant

does not get involved in your topic of interest"⁴⁸. The fact that many other groups never answered the invitation to speak in the framework of this research could be another indication that tackling corruption is linked to a form of civic and political engagement, as it involves denouncing the ruling elites or cooperating with institutions the ruling class controls in order to foster reform, which might alter the non-partisan and neutral stands of many of these organizations.

Be that as it may, the 2019 uprising and the Blast at the Beirut Port on the 4th August 2020, believed to have been caused by gross negligence and widespread corruption, has shattered much of the barriers between the diaspora and the homeland with regards to accountability and reform. As such, diaspora groups are much aware of the core characteristics of Greater Corruption in their home country. One respondent pointed to the fact that "such a level is unheard of", touching "every aspect of public life, from macro-policy run by the Central Bank to every day micro-acts such as bribing officials for silly services"⁴⁹, "becoming the new normal, otherwise you can't get everything done"⁵⁰.

For another respondent, it "has become so engrained in every institution of the country"⁵¹, hence "deeply institutionalized"⁵², where "high tolerance"⁵³ and "complacency"⁵⁴ have "contaminated the grassroots level, making it easier for higher levels to organize their own scope of corruption"⁵⁵. As a result says another respondent: "you see it and don't react anymore"⁵⁶, given how "widely spread and deeply rooted"⁵⁷ it has become. One respondent indicated that "Lebanon has become corrupt in the mind", at the same time, "the Lebanese are leaving abroad because of it"⁵⁸, showcasing the vicious cycle entangling the Lebanese context in the past decades.

Respondents have also pointed to how dangerous such phenomenon has become to the country, which "snowball effect"⁵⁹ has "degraded Lebanon"⁶⁰ and "broken both State and society"⁶¹. After the civil war, the country's system "moved from battlefield to Statehood where all warlords have taken their positions in the State, confiscating all of its trust. Actually, there is no State, they are the State, having traded their AK-47s with a tie, while making sure State institutions don't bother them"⁶².

Respondents denounce several of the characteristics attached to Greater Corruption in Lebanon, which they see as "generalized"⁶³, "disruptive"⁶⁴ and "terrible"⁶⁵. One respondent pointed to three main enabling factors of corruption in the country: "Sectarianism, leading to each community

⁴⁸ Response received by email on October 11th, 2022.

⁴⁹ Quote by a Key Informant

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having its own share among the State, clientelism and indoctrination, namely in education where each community has its own schools to channel its doctrine”.⁶⁶

On the other hand, there is a “great lack of civic education”⁶⁷ to counter-balance the force of such indoctrination, which has deeply shattered the very foundations of both State and society. Additionally, the “absence of the judiciary”⁶⁸ prevents any decrease in force of such a powerful phenomenon, and the Beirut Blast judicial proceedings constitute a perfect showcase as to how little independent the judiciary is in Lebanon.

As such, the understanding of many diaspora groups of corruption core dynamics in Lebanon have prompted their greater involvement in these matters. At the same time, the lack of institutional framework to receive the diaspora’s input doesn’t stand as an obstacle to the growing engagement of many of its groups abroad and the building of concrete bridges connections with groups and causes in Lebanon.

A few (non-exhaustive) illustrations can be given here: the MIDEL⁶⁹ (formerly RDCL⁷⁰), a coalition of employers in Lebanon and abroad, has been calling for stronger unity between the two spheres.⁷¹ The group has also been lobbying for greater transparency in light of the country’s economic and financial meltdown. In an op-ed published in July 2022, Riad Obegi, CEO of BEMO bank in Lebanon, but also board member of MIDEL, admitted “it was a historic mistake to default [the Eurobonds debts], the closure of the banks was a masterful blunder, the freezing of liquidity at the Central Bank was an incalculable mistake”⁷², and called for “transparency” in order to restore the trust in the banking sector.⁷³ Impact Lebanon had launched an Instagram account⁷⁴ to publish facts and figures denouncing illicit enrichment, collusion of private and public interests and lack of accountability.

More concretely, diaspora groups took directly part of homeland struggles, such as the Save the Bisri valley campaign⁷⁵. The struggle to stop the Bisri Dam, a project that would have gravely damaged the region’s ecosystem while failing at actually providing water, was started in 2014 by local environmental activists and was quickly picked up by many diaspora groups. The latter mainly engaged in diplomatic lobbying with the World Bank which was the main provider of funds for this project. Marc Tuéni, from Meghterbin Mejtemiin, which was among the diaspora groups involved in the campaign, explained how the group “could reach the World Bank over the Bisri campaign, a role played directly by the diaspora, whereas in Beirut, local groups were involved in grounds action using bulldozers, sit-ins and protests”.⁷⁶ The struggle was successful as the World Bank eventually withdrew its financial commitment to the Bisri dam in September 2020.⁷⁷

⁶⁶ Quote by a Key Informant

⁶⁷ Quote by a Key Informant

⁶⁸ Quote by a Key Informant

⁶⁹ Mouvement international des chefs d’entreprise libanais (International Movement of Lebanese Businessmen)

⁷⁰ Rassemblement des dirigeants et chefs d’entreprise (Gathering of Businessmen and Business Leaders)

⁷¹ L’Orient-Le Jour (2021). Le Midel appelle à une « union » entre les Libanais du Liban et ceux de la diaspora, 9 December 2021, available at <https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1284152/le-midel-appelle-a-une-union-entre-les-libanais-du-liban-et-ceux-de-la-diaspora.html>.

⁷² Riad Obegi (2022). Le Liban n’est pas en faillite, Ici Beyrouth, 12 July 2022, available at <https://icibeyrouth.com/opinions/96626?fbclid=IwAR0G2y9mlFLFu3Vuahh7FWcGPOD7NXWL2qg7otZCvXq3OrdZQvOJgJKSKm4>.

⁷³ Idem.

⁷⁴ <https://www.instagram.com/lebanon.corruption.facts/>, with 22.9K followers [accessed November 10th, 2022].

⁷⁵ Cf. the campaign’s Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/savebisri/>

⁷⁶ Key Informant Interview with Marc Tuéni, Meghterbin Mejtemiin, 20 October 2022, Paris.

⁷⁷ For more information on the World Bank’s decision, cf. The World Bank (2020). Factsheet Q&A: Bisri Dam Project Cancellation, 4 September 2020, available at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/factsheet/2020/09/04/bisri-dam-project-cancellation>.

M. Tuéni also mentioned other fronts his group was actively partaking to, such as the preservation of the commemorative stelae in Nahr Kalb, North of Beirut, which was threatened by a real estate project. The group was among those who mobilized by alerting the UNESCO, in addition to the French authorities in their quality of dual citizens, so to pressure the authorities of halting that project, which they eventually did.

For the group Meghterbin Mejtemiin, anti-corruption lobbying also meant following through a complaint against the Central Bank governor Riad Salameh in Switzerland.

Additionally, some diaspora groups are pushing for the European Union to issue sanctions against corrupt Lebanese politicians under the new Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime (GHRSR) which was adopted in December 2020. Because the crimes of corruption remain outside its primary scope, diaspora members are lobbying the European Parliament to amend the framework to include acts of great corruption to it.

Anti-corruption action also constitutes familiar grounds for the Mouvement des Citoyens Libanais du Monde (MCLM). The group's president Elian Sarkis pointed to the many initiatives they engaged into recently, among which the "successful lobbying to stop the disbursement of funds to the Lebanese State under the CEDRE⁷⁸ conference"⁷⁹ to prevent further illicit enrichment and embezzlement. As dual citizens, the group's chapter in France developed a narrative based on preserving the French taxpayers' money through holding the French authorities accountable in case of any transfer to the Lebanese corrupt State. Furthermore, in 2021, M. Sarkis co-drafted with other groups a petition directed to President Macron calling him to freeze dubious assets Lebanese leaders would have deposited in France.⁸⁰ Another collective call addressed to the French President was published in *Le Monde* in July 2022 to demand sanctions against corrupt leaders in Lebanon, also signed by other diaspora groups such as Collectif Libanais de France (CLF) and Diaspora Libanaise Overseas (DLO).⁸¹

More recently, in the aftermath of the agreement of the maritime border between Lebanon and Israel, the MCLM addressed a letter to Total-Energies, the main private contractor involved in the oil and gas exploration in both parties, as a sign of protest against the deal.

Among the respondent groups, LIFE Lebanon has recently established an "Advocacy Pillar", to better channel the call for transparency and accountability in Lebanon. The group already has partnerships with the LTA, the LCPS and universities such as the AUB and USJ, co-organizing events and webinars to push forward the principle of "holding officials accountable".⁸²

As such, Lebanese diaspora groups do not appear of shying away from national policies in relation to safeguarding public interest and public funds. From elections to asset recovery to pushing for

⁷⁸ The CEDRE conference of 2018 came in the aftermath of the cycle of three conferences (Paris I, II, III, in addition to Rome II and Brussels) at the initiative of the International Support Group for Lebanon during which the international community pledged over \$ 11 billion in loans and grants.

⁷⁹ Key Informant Interview with Marc Tuéni, Meghterbin Mejtemiin, 20 October 2022, Paris.

⁸⁰ Collectif (2021). « Monsieur le président, gelez les actifs d'origine douteuse détenus en France par les responsables libanais », *Le Monde*, 3 April 2021, available at https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2021/04/03/monsieur-le-president-gelez-les-actifs-d-origine-douteuse-detenus-en-france-par-les-responsables-libanais_6075481_3232.html.

⁸¹ Collectif (2022). « Monsieur le président de la République, nous demandons l'application des sanctions à l'encontre des dirigeants libanais corrompus », *Le Monde*, 12 July 2022, available at https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2022/07/12/monsieur-le-president-de-la-republique-nous-demandons-l-application-des-sanctions-a-l-encontre-des-dirigeants-libanais-corrompus_6134511_3232.html.

⁸² Key Informant Interview with Tony Al Hoyek, LIFE Lebanon, 212 October 2022, over Zoom.

reforms, accountability and even sanctions, many groups have crossed the “neutrality” line and joined the front against great corruption in Lebanon. The next section will explore the prospective dynamics of such engagement and how it could be anchored in the national scene.

B. Prospective role for further association with anti-corruption action

The Beirut Blast of the 4th of August 2020 illustrated the ultimate breakpoint in Lebanon’s management of its public interest, already characterized as a “broken concept” for a more than a decade now.⁸³ This manmade disaster, further disqualifying the Lebanese officials as fit for power, has “definitively”⁸⁴ changed the drivers channeling diaspora support towards Lebanon. One respondent noted that the change of stand of the diaspora actually “started on October 17th and accelerated after the August 4th Blast: with the uprising, the diaspora across the world stood up, mobilized and demonstrated for a new Lebanon. It’s the first time this was that massive. When the Blast happened, it engaged even more people.”⁸⁵ Another respondent pointed to how his group “sensed an appetite among our members who were sick of status quo, the economic crisis and monitoring the indicators without changes. Our members were desperate for support as they were picking up sense of despair, mainly to help the youth who channeled much sympathy from blast”⁸⁶

We have mentioned how massively the diaspora networks and groups have mobilized as a result of the incalculable devastation of the capital after the Port blast. A few went even further, “despite our limited capacities”⁸⁷, deciding to target the sources of the stream pouring such corruption and negligence. “We start with small bites, baby steps”⁸⁸, added another respondent, which resolution is intact to remain active in holding the political elites accountable for the perpetuation of the state of decay of the country. Another respondent introduced some nuance pointing to the fact that “we are not judges and we don’t point to corrupt people”⁸⁹, as an indication to a different path when it comes to the scope of advocacy.

At the same time, a respondent acknowledged that “diaspora members are also enduring harsh times today”⁹⁰, in addition to the fact that such actions “do not count as professional work, we do it on our own time, or own dimes”⁹¹. This doesn’t threaten however the will of many groups in relaying their energy to their fight for a better Lebanon. On this account, “diaspora cannot work alone, it would be superficial and not very efficient”⁹², as groups have developed extensive networks within the country, through which they advocate for a better Lebanon.

The prospective roles different solicited groups are diverse, drawing a nexus of initiatives defending a different approach to public interest in the country. As such, diaspora groups show a diversified

⁸³ Karim El Mufti (2011). The Management of Public Interest in Lebanon, a Broken Concept. Public Policy Initiative, Beirut, 21 September 2011, available at <https://beirutenterprise.blogspot.com/2011/09/management-of-public-interest-in.html>

⁸⁴ Quote by a Key Informant

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set of strategies and instruments to weigh in public debate on issues attached even remotely to tackling corruption.

Firstly, Role modeling was mentioned as an important influential standpoint, as diaspora members can “influence people, show for a different model and disseminate our values”.⁹³ We should “start with the basics: be the best versions of ourselves and reject corruption at an individual level. Leading by example would create new models among the Lebanese society, its environment and provide for role models of the Lebanese citizens”.⁹⁴ Moreover, many groups put a great deal of effort in identifying the CSOs “who deserve to be supported”⁹⁵, i.e. which show for transparency and a sound management of humanitarian aid and funds. In addition to refusing to fund the corrupt State and government, many diaspora groups intend to “make sure we don’t support, promote, celebrate corrupt people and organizations”.⁹⁶

Another important tactic put forward by diaspora groups is Diplomacy, through lobbying towards the authorities of their country of residence and/or the international community. According to one respondent, “the families of the victims of the Beirut Blast are not limited to those living in Lebanon”⁹⁷, pointing to the fact that many abroad have seen loved ones get hurt. In terms of action, the “diaspora can affect donors’ countries, it should pressure them to push for even harsher reforms and conditions coming from the Lebanese authorities”.⁹⁸ For one respondent, “there are so many institutions that the diaspora can reach abroad: the ICC, the UN, the EU, even if Lebanon is not a priority now. We can even access the US Senate, as many American Lebanese are lobbying there too”.⁹⁹ Lobbying can also take the form of legal action, taking the party of taxpayers in order to restrict their country of residence of channeling public funds to the Lebanese State, given the size of its endemic corruption.

Other groups opt also for channeling lobbying inside Lebanon, but indicate how frustrating the results can be without the proper implementation and law enforcement. Hence, the importance of Advocacy to “raise awareness on possible solutions”,¹⁰⁰ in order to shape and strengthen a public opinion which could push for needed reforms. Another respondent highlights the idea that there “is no country free of corruption, but we can address this through advocacy”.¹⁰¹ Such campaigns can even take a more political aspect through calls for boycott of particular brands or companies owned by public officials, despite the fact that “it’s harder to organize among the diaspora. Once we identify for example a restaurant owned by someone in power in Lebanon, we spread the word and try to hurt them economically”, explains the same respondent.¹⁰²

Such direct tactics can also come in the form of public confrontations when Lebanese politicians travel to the diaspora’ country of residence and are recognized in the public space, café or restaurant. This trend was made popular in Lebanon during the 2019 uprising with activists confronting public officials and their bodyguards while taking videos of the scene to promote and encourage standing up openly to the corrupt leadership.

⁹³ Quote by a Key Informant

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As such, some diaspora groups openly label their action as “political”: “it needs to be political work, says one activist, otherwise there is no point”¹⁰³, indicating that the struggle against corruption “is a power struggle, and without power to empower and protect judges for instance, lives can be in danger because of mafia rulers”.¹⁰⁴ The need for an independent judiciary has been brought forward multiple times by respondents: “without accountability all efforts will go in vain”¹⁰⁵ said one respondent; “you can put 100 people in jail today, what’s the point if tomorrow they can get out”¹⁰⁶; “they [the leaders] need to be punished”¹⁰⁷, as one interviewee called to “remove immunity and political coverage of those in power”.¹⁰⁸ In terms of the political struggle, we have already mentioned earlier the greater involvement of diaspora groups and members in the electoral process: “we need proper representation in parliament, then cabinet, said a respondent, the diaspora should rally and hold ranks”.¹⁰⁹

Conclusion & Recommendations

Though limited and non-exhaustive, this study was an attempt to capture the perception and prospective of the Lebanese diaspora in relation to the battle against the Hydra-shaped corruption in Lebanon. The findings show how both the 2019 uprising and the Beirut Blast of August 2020 have profoundly impacted the Lebanese diaspora, as its growing involvement could be observed both in the country and abroad. The traditional depiction of the “diaspora as cash milking cow for Lebanon”¹¹⁰ surely now belongs to the past.

This engagement has even deeply wandered into elections territory, while many groups have taken up a form of action closer to political traits, both abroad and in Lebanon. The bridge between the two spheres, commonly calling for profound reforms in terms of transparency and accountability, has been present for some time now as we can observe growing coordination and co-operation efforts through the various tools and instruments tentatively identified in the course of this paper.

The latter was also the opportunity to observe how poorly the diaspora was associated to the formal international and national planification towards good governance and the calls for institutional reforms and accountability. The unfortunate developments in Beirut and its growing dependency on aid has also strengthened the awareness of diaspora groups as to the need of greater scrutiny in terms of transparency among the donors’ community, in order to prevent Lebanese diaspora money to end up in the pockets of the corrupt.

As such, the interviewees share the understanding of how the combat against corruption is a common battle in which they undoubtedly have their share to play to push for reforms. As one respondent put it: “we should start with institutions and then the rest will follow”¹¹¹, showing the eagerness of the Lebanese abroad to be part of change and to be closely engaged in the combat to salvage the Lebanese public interest in their home country and/or country of origin.

¹⁰³ Quote by a Key Informant

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DIASPORA GROUPS AND NETWORKS

Prevention (promotion of transparency, advocacy)

- Support national and local enablers pushing Digital Government agendas in Lebanon.
- Lobby members of the International Support Group for Lebanon to pressure the country to uphold international agreements against corruption, facilitate access to public information and implement current anti-corruption legislation.
- Mobilize resources to foster civic education and citizenry principles at all age levels, starting with earliest classes in schools.
- Demand and implement mechanisms to uphold highest standards of transparency from local beneficiaries of financial support in Lebanon.

- Initiate and/or support legal actions in countries of interest to identify, seize and recover stolen public assets transferred outside Lebanon; sanction corrupt Lebanese leaders and economic actors.

Political accountability (political and citizens mobilization)

- Strengthen civic and political engagement, increasing campaigns for voters' registration and elections involvement for the diaspora.
- Bridge co-operation with CSOs in Lebanon specialized in transparency and accountability;
- Support free, independent and alternative investigative journalism in Lebanon;
- Channel protection against any potential arbitrary arrest and persecution of activists, journalists, whistleblowers;
- Support the setting-up of People's Tribunal to symbolically hold accountable the public officials responsible for the Beirut Port Blast.

Institutional-building (strengthening legal and institutional frameworks)

- Channel expertise on best practices in relation to anti-corruption mechanisms;
- Push for the implementation of anti-corruption priorities in the areas of government procurement and public tendering;
- Support strategic public actors and oversight mechanisms, such as Central Inspection Body, National Anti-Corruption Commission, Institute of Finance of the Ministry of Finance, Whistleblowing Office of the General Prosecution Office.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS ACTIVE IN LEBANON

- Systematically include Lebanese diaspora representation in advocacy and lobbying efforts in relation to public interest in Lebanon;
- Pressure the Lebanese authorities to preserve the Lebanese diaspora voting rights and amend the electoral law which plans to restrict the representation of the diaspora in 6 new MPs;
- Strengthen efforts to better inform Lebanese diaspora groups and networks about their work and actions in Lebanon.

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Appendix: Key Informant Interview Questionnaire

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

QUESTIONNAIRE

Semi-structured interviews

:Senior Researcher

Karim El Mufti

October 2022

Background

I am conducting, on behalf of the Lebanese Transparency Association (LTA) in Beirut, a study on the "Role of Diaspora Groups in combating corruption in Lebanon".

For this purpose, I am happy to extend an invitation to meet with one of your representatives for an interview to discuss different aspects of this important issue as to include your group's views and perspectives on the matter.

The interview will also explore ways and means aimed at strengthening the channels between Lebanese diaspora groups and national efforts in tackling greater corruption in the country.

The interview would be conducted remotely through Zoom in the language of your preference: English, Arabic or French.

The list of the groups which will have responded to the interview will be publicly displayed in the study, however, the content of the discussions will be dealt under Chatham House Rules, i.e. without a direct reference to the group's identity.

Questions

1- **DIASPORA ROLE IN SUPPORTING LEBANON**

- What are the main **fields** in which the Lebanese diaspora are the most **successful** in supporting Lebanon?
- Do you think these fields are the most needed to sustain Lebanon's support on the long run?
- In your opinion, have the main **driver(s)** channeling diaspora support to the home country **changed since the Beirut Blast**?

2- **DIASPORA GROUPS PERCEPTION OF CORRUPTION**

- How would you **describe** corruption in Lebanon?
- What would be in your opinion the main **characteristics** of corruption in the country?
- Are you aware of the **present efforts** in tackling corruption in Lebanon nowadays from legal and institutional aspects?

3- DIASPORA ACTION AGAINST CORRUPTION

- There is **hardly any mention** of diaspora role in anti-corruption plans and strategies, why is that in your opinion?
- How do you see the **role** diaspora groups in combatting corruption in their country of residence?
- How do you see the **role** diaspora groups in combatting corruption in Lebanon? How effective would this be in your opinion?
- Do diaspora groups have the **capacity** of tackling anti-corruption agenda in Lebanon?
- What would be the **goals** diaspora groups could achieve in this struggle?
- What could be the **tools** diaspora groups could resort to in this struggle?

