

ARMENIAN PARTICIPATION IN THE LEBANESE LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS DURING THE PRESIDENCY OF EMILE LAHOUD (1998-2007)¹ PART I

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INTRODUCTION

After the legislative elections of 1996 attention turned to the presidential elections. In November 1998 the commander in-chief of the army, Gen. Emile Lahoud, was elected President of the Republic succeeding president Elias Hraoui.

During the period between the elections of 1996 and 2000, Lebanon was, in general, in a peaceful condition. Syrian forces were stationed in Lebanon, and the influence of their intelligence chief, Gen. Ghazi Kenaan, was paramount in local politics. The pro-Syrians dominated the Lebanese government. Most of the Maronites, with the moral and overt support of their patriarchate, opposed the Syrians and demanded the departure of their forces, according to the terms of the Taef Agreement of 1989.

On 25 May 2000 the Israeli occupation troops withdrew from South Lebanon. Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel had decided on unilateral withdrawal, as the number of the Israeli casualties rose to over 500 dead, due to the Lebanese Resistance. After the liberation of the South, the prestige of the Hezbollah party increased.

The Armenian communities of Lebanon were not indifferent to the events in Armenia, which sometimes impacted their political life. After the resignation of President Levon Der Bedrossian in early 1998, Prime Minister Robert Kotcharian was elected president. This ushered in a regime change. On 27 October 1999 five assassins stormed the Armenian Parliament, which was in session, and killed the speaker Garen Demirdjian, the Prime Minister Vazken Sarkissian and four other MPs. In the ensuing vacancy, the political power of President Kotcharian was enhanced. After new parliamentary elections, the Tashnag Party of Armenia joined in the new coalition government and assumed ministerial posts. As the Ramgavar and Huntchag parties had supported President Der Bedrossian and the Tashnags had opposed him, the regime change in Armenia inadvertently removed a major obstacle in the relations of the

first two Armenian political parties with the Tashnags in the Armenian Diaspora and in particular in Lebanon.

The Armenian political parties of Lebanon had maintained contacts with each other. On 24 April 2000, the commemoration day of the 85th anniversary of the Armenian genocide, a mass march of Armenians from the Catholicossate at Antelias to the Municipal stadium in Bourdj Hammoud was staged with all three parties collaborating.

Another major event for the Armenians was the untimely death of the Catholicos of All Armenians, Karekin I, who was succeeded by Archbishop Karekin Nercessian as Karekin II, elected on 27 October 1999 by the conclave of religious and lay delegates at Etchmiadzin. The Catholicos of Cilicia, Aram I accompanied by several bishops, consecrated the newly elected Catholicos of all Armenians.

In Lebanon, within each Armenian political party, new developments had taken place.

The Tashnag Party Central Committee of Lebanon had disagreements with Bourdj Hammoud municipality head, Tsolag Tutelian. The whole municipal council was asked to resign and in the elections, Tutelian was left out from the list.²

An influential member of the Tashnag Party, former minister of petroleum Shahé Barsoumian, was jailed on embezzlement charges. On 14 March 2000 *Aztag* wrote that chief Attorney Abdel Rahman Shehab demanded 3 to 15 years hard labour for Barsoumian.³

The Huntchag Party Central Council met in Beirut, 8 to 12 April 2000, and decided "to put an end to the undesired condition of incomprehension", and elected a new executive body for Lebanon, comprising 13 members, which included Sebouh Kalpakian and Mihran Seferian, candidate in the legislative elections of 1996.⁴

The Ramgavar Azadagan Party, which was facing serious internal divisions, came to an agreement, which was signed in Paris on 13 February 2000 by the opposing faction leaders, Haygashen Ouzounian and Hagop Kassardjian. Through this agreement the mutual expulsions were cancelled, both sides decided to strictly follow the by-laws of the party and they decided to call the 22nd convocation of the General party Delegates.⁵

PARTIAL ELECTIONS OF 1999

On the parliamentary front, due to the death of deputy Khatchig Babikian in early November 1999, the Minister of Interior announced that on 19 December 1999 partial elections would take place for the vacant Armenian Orthodox seat.⁶

Intense efforts were made by the authorities to have a single candidate, preferably a jointly endorsed candidate enjoying the support of all three Armenian political parties, to avoid financially costly elections as far as the government was concerned.

MP Jacques Joukhadarian expressed his view that the Tashnag party had not yet announced its choice, but could propose a "candidate of unanimity" on whom all would agree. *Zartong* criticized the "superiority complex" in some, indirectly alluding to the Tashnag party, in disregarding the views of the component elements of the Lebanese Armenian community or in claiming to represent them. In the end the newspaper, although indicating a comprehension of the difficulties of the country, nevertheless asked if there was a candidate of "unanimity" and found it doubtful.⁷

On 20 November 1999 *Aztag* published the communiqué of the Tashnag Central Committee of Lebanon, which said that after consultations with various Armenian currents the Committee would declare the name of the concord candidate for the Beirut partial elections.⁸

Local papers mentioned the names of Minister Arthur Nazarian, Souren Khanamirian, Ara Yerevanian, Andre Tabourian and Meguerditch Bouldoukian as probable candidates.⁹

The efforts and pressures of the authorities bore fruit. On 30 November 1999, the Huntchag, Tashnag and Ramgavar Azadagan parties issued a joint declaration that on that day they had met in the Yerevanian center of the Tashnag party and decided upon a joint candidate, namely former deputy Andre Tabourian.¹⁰ The latter enjoyed the endorsement of Catholicos Aram I. *Ararad*, *Aztag* and *Zartong* published the joint communiqué on their first pages, along with the biography of Tabourian, president of Interbrand (Libby's) company and member of the Civil Central Council of the Catholicossate of Cilicia since 1992.¹¹

Aztag noted that the Huntchag-Ramgavar-Tashnag unanimous attitude created the opportunity for the continuation of the work of the late deputy Babikian with ease and constructive cooperation.¹²

Before the announcement of the joint candidate, a delegation of the Tashnag Central Committee of Lebanon had met president Emile Lahoud, speaker Nabih Berry, Prime Minister Selim Hoss and former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.¹³

On 1 December, Tabourian visited the Tashnag Sardarabad Club¹⁴ and thanked the representatives of the three Armenian political parties for their support. On 2 December he visited the Ramgavar party at the Tekeyan Center¹⁵ and on 6 December the Huntchag headquarters,¹⁶ thanking them for their support.

Only the Armenian Communist weekly, *Gantch*, commented on Tabourian's election. The weekly said it did not know upon what consideration this was done, but the selection of one candidate was made in order to avoid a partial election just months before the 2000 general elections. The newspaper added, "frankly speaking, they had gathered no information on the 8 years of parliamentary life of Tabourian. He had no serious activity there." Then *Gantch* added, they would have preferred Nazarian or Bouldoukian, who had had an active role in Lebanon.¹⁷

On 6 December, Tabourian through a communiqué thanked the Tashnag, Ramgavar Azadagan and Huntchag parties. He expressed his joy at their unanimity and expressed his conviction that by united and collective efforts the Armenian community would have its rightful place in Lebanese society.¹⁸

On 7 December deputy Tabourian joined the Armenian Bloc¹⁹ led by the Tashnags, unlike deputies Demirdjian and Djeredjian who had stayed out. Minister Nazarian, a first cousin of Dr. Sebouh Hovnanian, although an AGBU leader, had joined the Armenian Bloc. On 14 December, Armenia's ambassador to Lebanon, Armand Navasartian, congratulated Tabourian in a communiqué published in the three Armenian political party newspapers.²⁰

THE LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS OF 2000

On 9 December 1999, the Council of Ministers approved the new electoral law. It divided Beirut into three electoral districts. Beirut I comprised Eshrefieh, Mazraa, Sayfi; Beirut II, Meseitbe, Bashoura, and Rmeil and Beirut III Ain El Mreyse, Ras Beirut, Zokak el Blat, Mudawar, Marfa, and Minet El Hosn. Mt. Lebanon was also divided into several districts and the second district there was that of North Metn, which included Bourdj Hammoud.²¹ Zahle was also one of the three districts of the Bekaa.

Later on it was claimed that this was Ghazi Kanaan's electoral law, framed in such a way that Hariri would not be able to win a complete list in a single Beirut electoral district.

Prior to the Council of Ministers' decision, on 6 December the Huntchag Lebanese Executive Body issued a declaration stating that it was against the National Pact and the Constitution to divide Beirut into electoral districts and that Beirut, which is administratively one unit and indivisible, should be kept as one electoral district. They further added that Beirut was geographically one joint area and represented Lebanon and its electoral unity would symbolize Lebanon's unity. Former electoral districts had become wartime borders. The principles on which the Beirut

electoral districts were drawn were unknown and suspicious, as well as artificial, and based on sectarian considerations.²²

The Ramgavar Azadagan Party Lebanon District Committee also issued a communiqué dated 8 December stating, first, that the *Mohafaza* as an electoral district matched the Lebanese National Pact. Second, Beirut could not be compared with other *Mohafazas* as the unity of Beirut bore a great moral importance, while the proposal intended to divide it, and it was the only Lebanese city to be dealt with in this way. Third, Beirut's sectarian, district and political attitude had to be realized in making Beirut one electoral district.²³

On 22 December 1999 parliament approved the electoral law of 2000 by 81 votes with 17 deputies voting against and 4 abstaining. Rafik Hariri, Najah Wakim, Hagop Demirjian, Yeghia Djeredjian, Tammam Salam and others who were friends of Hariri were among those who cast the negative votes.²⁴

Jacques Joukhadarian, speaking in the name of the Armenian Bloc, complained about the placement of the Protestant seat in Beirut I. He said there were only 600 Protestant votes in Beirut I and 4000 in Beirut III. But the majority in parliament disregarded the complaint, so the Armenian Bloc did not participate in the vote on Beirut's sectarian seat distribution, but approved the electoral law of 2000, along with the majority of the parliamentarians.²⁵

President Lahoud said the law respected the principle of "not eliminating anyone, since it is impossible to find an ideal electoral law in the presence of a sectarian system."²⁶

The Daily Star wrote "Competition among the capital's three leading contenders, Prime Minister Hoss, former premier Hariri and Beirut MP Tammam Salam is expected to be ferocious. Hariri planned to battle in each district. He had informally approached Salam, son of former PM Saeb Salam, to form a joint list in Beirut II, but it was believed that Salam would decline an alliance with Hariri "because it could endanger his good relations with president Emile Lahoud's administration."²⁷

Hariri would run in Beirut I, where he was strong, and in Beirut III, where Hoss was thought to be strong, Hariri would take advantage of the premier's weak points to build up alliances."²⁸

In Beirut II Hariri had proposed that Salam take his ally Beshara Merhej on his list as Greek Orthodox candidate. In Beirut I he wanted Atef Majdalani on his list and had discussed his candidacy with Fouad Boutros, an influential Greek Orthodox former minister and deputy.²⁹

Furthermore, *The Daily Star* asked Hariri if he "would also try to divide the Armenian votes, who are among Beirut's most formidable

electoral blocs, by benefiting from competition among the three Armenian parties. The Tashnak Party, the most powerful of the three, is seen as being split between the followers of former Oil Minister Shahe Barsoumian and supporters of Metn MP Sebouh Hovnanian. Hariri is likely to invest efforts in the first group.” The paper said, the Armenian vote on the election law showed that Hariri still enjoyed the support of a portion of this community. Beirut MPs Hagop Demirdjian and Yeghia Djeredjian, members of Hariri’s parliamentary bloc, voted against the law- unlike the three other Armenian MPs representing Beirut, who were loyal to the Tashnag Party leadership. Hariri was also seen as trying to exploit the relatively weak links between the Prime Minister and the speaker, especially as Hoss was expected to choose Education Minister Mohammad Youssef Beydoun as a Shiite candidate on his list.³⁰

Zartouk referred to the possible loss of the Evangelical seat by the Armenians and questioned if anything was being done about it and further protested that former minister Barsoumian had been in jail for 10 months without any formal accusation against him.³¹

In February the Armenian Bloc was very active. It demanded that the Armenian Martyrs’ Day, April 24, be declared a state vacation day. The bloc requested the appointment of more Armenians appointed as officials in the state apparatus and the recognition of Armenian as a third language in the Educational Curriculum. The government gave its consent for a draft law that Armenian would be substituted for German as a second foreign language and minister Beydoun announced this.³²

Electoral visits began soon after the electoral law was promulgated. A delegation led by the Ramgavar Lebanon District Committee chairman Hovsep Emirian met Salam on 19 January 2000. Both sides agreed to continue their close cooperation.³³ On the same day the same delegates visited speaker Berry at the American University Hospital, wishing him speedy recovery.³⁴ On 26 February a Ramgavar delegation met Prime Minister Hoss at the Serail.³⁵ On 15 March a Ramgavar delegation led by Central Council chairman Hagop Kassardjian, including Emirian, met president Lahoud at the presidential palace, where they discussed political issues and declared the complete support of their party for the president.³⁶ A delegation of the Ramgavar and Tekeyan Cultural Association visited Catholicos Aram I at Antelias on 18 March 2000³⁷ and the prelate of the Armenian Orthodox Community, Bishop Kegham Khacherian, on 13 March 2000.³⁸

On 15 March a Huntchag delegation led by Central Council president Vahridj Djeredjian and Executive Body chairman Sebouh Kalpakian and accompanied by MP Yeghia Djeredjian visited president Lahoud in

Baabda. They discussed Lebanese political issues and the party announced its complete support for the president.³⁹

On 5 April Zahle deputy Elie Skaff visited the Sardaradad club of the Tashnag Party and met the Central Committee of the party and discussed electoral issues. Skaff said he trusted the Tashnag party to select a nominee for the Armenian seat on his list.⁴⁰

On 9 June a delegation of the Central Committee of the Tashnag Party consecutively visited the president of the Union of Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East, Rev. Meguerditch Karageuzian, and the Union's central council chairman, Rev. Dr. Paul Haidostian, Armenian Catholic Patriarch Nerses-Bedros XIX Tarmouni and Bishop Vartan Ashkarian and the Prelate of the Armenian Orthodox community Bishop Kegham Khacherian. The committee informed the religious dignitaries that it would exercise all its efforts to face the legislative elections with a united front. The religious leaders expressed their view that the unity of Armenians would be in the superior interest of the Armenian communities and Lebanon.⁴¹

American diplomat Edward Djeredjian, who was visiting Lebanon on a mission from the USA government and had seen the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister and other responsible officials, met Catholicos Aram I of the See of Cilicia at the Catholicosate in Antelias.⁴²

Upon the invitation of Aram I, on 22 February 2000, Djeredjian met the Armenian deputies, as well as Huntchag, Tashnag and Ramgavar central bodies representatives at the catholicosate. No information was released as to the topics discussed, but as the elections were near, probably they were on the agenda.⁴³

Soon afterwards the Tashnag Central Committee of Lebanon and the Ramgavar Azadagan Lebanon District Council met in March 2000, to discuss Armenian and Lebanese issues, including the elections.⁴⁴ On 28 March the Huntchag, Tashnag and Ramgavar Lebanon bodies' representatives met at the Yerevanian Center of the Tashnag party and formed a united committee for the joint celebration of the 85th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.⁴⁵

On 11 May the same bodies met at the Tashnag club to discuss the forthcoming elections and other matters and expressed their satisfaction with the Lebanese parliament's resolution on the Armenian Genocide.⁴⁶ Finally on 5 June 2000, the same bodies of the three Armenians political parties met at the Yerevanian Center, and, in a communiqué signed by all three and published in their newspapers the next day, they announced that "the meeting had underlined the necessity of presenting to the forthcoming

legislative elections a united front.” The communiqué added the meetings would continue.⁴⁷

Aztag and *Zartonk* wrote about the collective work and united effort, needed within the community.⁴⁸ On 20 June the Armenian Bloc expressed its satisfaction with the efforts to bring forth a united Armenian front, as expressed by the three Armenian political parties.⁴⁹ On 22 June the three bodies of the Armenian political parties met at the Tekeyan Club to discuss the elections.⁵⁰

On 10 July Catholicos Aram I hosted Rafik Hariri and discussed matters related to the elections.⁵¹

On the eve of his departure to the Armenian Dioceses of Iran, Catholicos Aram I appealed to the Armenians of Lebanon. As he would be absent for a few weeks he stressed general points. First, as the Armenian church is a national church, it has the duty of keeping strong the internal unity of the Armenian people, when it feels it is endangered or can be endangered. Second, without doubting the sense of duty of the Armenian political organizations and without interfering in their points of view on activities, he appealed to them to act with prudence and keep strong the unity of the Lebanese Armenians. He added that as a community the following points were to be taken into consideration. First, to elect individuals who are strongly attached to the superior interests of the community. Second, it is necessary to pursue the supreme interests of Lebanon. Third, it is necessary to be circumspect about interests related to the Lebanese Syrian friendship. Syria has “had a salutary role in Lebanon and has been its ally against the Zionist enemy” and has helped in maintaining the internal stability of Lebanon; furthermore Syria is a friendly country to the Armenian people. The Catholicos concluded that in our immediate surrounding there are some who want to see the Armenians divided and want to impose certain situations and acts on the Armenian community. Therefore our primary concern should be the maintenance of the integrity and unity of the Armenians of Lebanon.⁵²

Just as the Catholicos issued his appeal, Bashar el Assad, son of the late president Hafez Assad, was elected President of Syria. The Huntchag Executive Body of Lebanon,⁵³ deputy Dr. Djeredjian,⁵⁴ the Lebanon Central Committee of the Tashnag party,⁵⁵ the Ramgavar Azadagan District Council and the Central Council⁵⁶ sent congratulatory cables to the newly elected president. The Armenian Bloc and deputy Apraham Dedeyan, individually, sent congratulatory cables.⁵⁷ On 20 July 2000, a delegation of the Tashnag Central Committee, accompanied by Dr. Sebouh Hovnanian, went to Kerdeha to participate in the 40th day ceremonies for the passing away of president Hafez Assad.⁵⁸ In Anjar, on 22 July, a

requiem was conducted in the Armenian church for the late president. Among those present were Elie Skaff, Khalil Hraoui, Mohsen Dalloul, Mohamad Meys, Georges Kassardji and Dr. Hovnanian, as well as Syrian forces representative Colonel Bourhan. After the religious service, Yessayi Havatian and Giragos Keledjian spoke about the deceased Syrian president and his role.⁵⁹

At the beginning of June 2000, the local press was already mentioning the candidates on Hariri's lists. *Zartouk*, gathering its information from these newspapers, wrote that Hariri intended to take on his lists in Beirut I Adnan Arakji, Michel Pharaon, Atef Majdalani, Basil Fleihan and Ghattas Khoury. In Beirut II he intended to take Basem Yamout, Walid Eido, Ghazi Youssef, Beshara Merhej, Yeghia Djeredjian and Nabil Freige; in Beirut III Ghenwa Jalloul and Jean Hovassapian (Oghassabian).⁶⁰ Hoss intended to include in his list Isam Naaman, Mohammad Youssef Beydoun, and Ahmad Tabbara and was waiting for the nomination of Armenian candidates. As for Tammam Salam, the hope was not ruled out for cooperation with Hariri. Isam Baadarani was mentioned as a possible ally for Salam.⁶¹

Indeed on 9 June *Zartouk* announced that former presidential guard chief officier Col. Jean Hovassapian and Ghazi Aridi had visited the Ramgavar Azadagan party leadership at the Tekeyan Center. Although the text did not mention it; the published pictures showed that Hagop Kassardjian and Hovsep Emirian were among those who hosted the two candidates, who were accompanied by Hariri's aid for Armenian affairs, Ara Sisserian.⁶²

The Council of Ministers declared the election would be held on two consecutive Sundays, 27 August and 3 September. The Armenian united front of the three Armenian political parties had not materialized. By the end of the first week of July, it was apparent that the Armenian political parties had not reached an agreement. This was reflected through editorial comments in their newspapers.

Aztag wrote on 17 July that the elections were approaching, interests were being clarified and rival groups were being formed. Also the interests of the Lebanese Armenian community were being clarified, and day by day the struggle against its great power was stressed. An effort was made to influence Beirut Armenian voters through material promises, to divide the people from their leading organizations. So the Armenians had to become prudent and rally together.⁶³

The next day, *Zartouk* wrote, the Ramgavar Azadagan party was in favor of unity, but a sincere and honest one, based on mutual respect and rights. The paper then criticized those Armenian deputies [i.e. the

Armenian Bloc], who had voted in favor of the electoral law, knowing that the Armenians would lose the Evangelical seat. The *Ramgavar* daily added, unity must be respected without discrimination and in consultation with all political circles. If there were to be unity in Beirut, there should also be in Metn, Tripoli and Zahle. However, in the case of the last electoral district, the candidacy of Georges Kassardji was put forward by an urgent initiative, outside of unity. The paper, then questioned the unnatural silence of the Armenian Evangelical community regarding the defense of the Evangelical seat.⁶⁴

Indeed, the Tashnag party had endorsed the candidacy of Kassardji in Zahle on Skaiff's list.

On 15 July *Aztag* had announced in a brief statement that the incumbent deputy, Georges Kassardji, was the Tashnag Party candidate in Zahle. The Central Committee had met MP Elie Skaiff the previous day and presented their candidate, Kassardji, for his list.⁶⁵

In *Aztag* Dikran Djinbashian wrote "not only the existence of the Armenian Bloc is a necessity, but it is important that the Bloc be numerous and strong. We must secure seven MPs and forbid persons bearing Armenian names but having no relations with the Armenian community from entering the parliament. We must not cede the Evangelical seat. Besides, we must make sure that all the elected Armenian deputies become members of the Armenian Parliamentary Bloc. The main reason for the unified participation in the legislative elections is the creation of parliamentary strength."⁶⁶

Zartouk wrote unity does not mean subjugation, surrender, imposing conditions, superiority, inferiority, boasting, sectarianism, and sovereignty. Unity assumes adherence, concord, equality, cooperation, bringing together, tolerance, centrifugality, stand. *Zartouk* then asked "who said unity shall be in one place and not another. Why should there not be unity in Zahle and Metn."⁶⁷

On 17 July 2000, Minister of Interior Michel Murr announced that the period of submitting candidacies in Mount Lebanon was to extend from 17 July to 11 August and the deadline to withdraw from candidacy was 16 August, while in Beirut and Zahle submission of candidacies was from 17 July to 18 August and the deadline to withdraw 23 August.⁶⁸

Once the deadlines were known and the disunity in the Armenian community was known by the public at large, visits by the Armenian political parties leaderships and declaration of candidacies were resumed.

On 14 July a delegation of the Tashnag Lebanon Central Committee accompanied by Dr. Hovnanian visited President Lahoud in Baabda to discuss the elections. The visitors stressed the need to safeguard the rights

of the Armenian community.⁶⁹ On the same day the Armenian Bloc met to discuss how to defend the Armenian community's rights in Beirut I and heard a report on the efforts made to maintain Armenian unity.⁷⁰

On 15 July *Zartouk* announced that the Ramgavar Azadagian party's candidate for the Armenian Orthodox seat of Beirut III was its Central Council's president Hagop Kassardjian. The party also declared its support for Hariri's Beirut Dignity lists and its belief that the legislative elections would best show the choice of the Lebanese, as there was the guarantee of president Lahoud behind it.⁷¹

Hagop Kassardjian, born in Beirut in 1946, studied at the Armenian Evangelical College and British School for Boys and graduated from the Faculty of Engineering of the American University of Beirut. He has been a member of AGBU and AYA, the chairman of its University Students Association in 1974-1975 and chairman of the AYA executive committee. During the Lebanese war he lived in France, from 1979, and during 1981-1993 he was the secretary of the AGBU France District Council. He joined the Ramgavar Azadagian Party in 1977, served as the party's France District Council chairman, in 1988 was elected a member of the party's Central Council; since 1995 he has been its president.⁷²

The news of Kassardjian's candidacy was given in *Aztag* under the headline of "the Ramgavars break Armenian unity."⁷³

On 16 July some television stations and newspapers announced that the Huntchag party Lebanon Executive Body had proclaimed MP Dr. Yeghia Djeredjian its candidate for the Armenian Orthodox seat of Beirut II. Dr. Djeredjian told the al-Markaziya news agency that the Lebanon Executive Body of the Huntchag party had met a fortnight before and 12 out of the 13 members were present (the absent member had traveled) and voted on the party candidate. 8 had voted for and 4 against his candidacy. The 8 members also had voted for cooperation with Hariri.⁷⁴ However, later on, the Central Council of the party declared that 8 did not constitute a two thirds majority.⁷⁵

Later on another declaration, also on behalf of the Huntchag party Lebanon Executive Body, declared Yeghia Djeredjian was not their candidate and news sources should verify the accuracy of any information from them. The Party Central Council also issued a communiqué that it had studied the Armenian community's rights, especially, the Evangelical seat's belonging to the Armenians and stressed Armenian unity. The communiqué said the party's Lebanon Executive Body would clarify matters to its rank and file and the people through communiqués approved by the Central Council.⁷⁶

Apparently there was a split in the Huntchag party. On 20 July the Central Council dissolved the Lebanon Executive Body led by Sebouh Kalpakian and appointed a new Executive Body of 11 members, including Dr. Serop Demirdjian, Vasil Akelian, Dr. Hagop Tossounian, Mihran Seferian, Dr. Mardig Jamgotchian and Garo Baghsarian.⁷⁷ This Executive body later presented the candidacy of Mihran Seferian on 6 August.⁷⁸ On 1 August the Huntchag Central Council declared that MP Djeredjian was expelled from the Huntchag party for "anti-party and indisciplinary course."⁷⁹ The Communist *Gantch* stated on 29 July that the Lebanese Women's League had presented the candidacy of Mrs. Linda Matar-Pandjardjian for the Armenian Orthodox seat in Beirut II.⁸⁰ On 5 August *Gantch* published her picture and electoral plan.⁸¹

Antoine Misperian who had very unsuccessfully tried in a few previous elections to solicit the Minorities seat in Beirut, did not give up hope and wanted to be a candidate. He visited the Tashnag Sardarabad Club on 6 August, apparently to request support, but was turned down as the Tashnag Party supported Habib Ephrem of Hoss's list. So he did not officially present his candidacy, and his name was not mentioned again.⁸²

Commenting on the elections, Kasbar Derderian wrote in *Gantch* that "the Armenian fanatic nationalists (i.e. the Tashnags) had stubbornly insisted" that the Evangelical seat should belong to the Armenians, as the Armenian Evangelicals constitute the majority of Protestants in Beirut, instead of respecting the Armenian-Arab rotation. The result of this bigotry was the placement of the Evangelical seat in Beirut I, where all Armenian and Arab protestants are the least in number among Beirut's three electoral districts. It was regrettable that the Protestant MP Aphram Dedeyan, who had proven to be very active in parliament and had written articles in the local Arab press, was going to lose the elections and most probably Fleihan would be elected.⁸³

24 July 2000 was a busy day full of electoral activities. On that day in an interview in *Aztag* the prelate of the Armenians of Lebanon, Bishop Kegham, said, "by unity we shall continue to prove our collective presence and to defend all our rights".⁸⁴ The same day a delegation of the Tashnag Central Committee visited Prime Minister Hoss and discussed the electoral situation in Beirut III and the possibilities of electoral cooperation. The PM said in Beirut he was ready to cooperate with the Tashnag Party and those parties that maintained unity. At the same time, the Tashnag party was holding preparatory meetings. On 24 July, in Hotel Alexander, the Central Committee met with representatives of the three Armenian communities. In this meeting it was announced that the Evangelical seat was being contested in Beirut I, where there were only 3500 Armenian

voters, and Hariri was unyielding on ceding this seat to the Armenians. The party declared it was not possible to cede this seat, gained by their political weight. Furthermore they added that they could not think of a situation when an Armenian MP could be elected and stay out of the Bloc, thus weakening the latter structure.⁸⁵

The next day the Tashnag Central Committee met with the Armenian Orthodox Community Communal authorities. Judging from the picture published in *Aztag*, among those present was former deputy and Minister Souren Khanamirian. The party representatives stressed the priority of preserving the Evangelical seat and mentioned the obstacles raised by Hariri and the position of the Ramgavar Azagagan Party, which was straying from the unity of the Lebanese Armenians. They stressed that they were against Armenian MPs joining other parliamentary blocs.⁸⁶

On 31 July the Tashnag party local leadership had another public meeting at Hotel Alexander, in the presence of MP Dedeyan as well as Armenian officials in the state apparatus and 200 other persons. During the meeting an account was given of the meetings held with the Huntchag and Ramgavar Azadagan parties regarding the Evangelical seat's defence. It was noted that the Ramgavars had refused to adopt the same stand.⁸⁷

The Tashnag Central Committee, accompanied by Dr. Hovnanian, on 1 August also visited Hezbollah leader Sheikh Hasan Nassrallah. During the meeting both sides confirmed the principle of cooperation between both parties in the three electoral districts of Beirut.⁸⁸

The Tashnag Central Committee also received visits at its headquarters. Among the visitors were candidates Behaeddine Itani, Tony Tohme, Mohammad Youssef Beydoun, Ghazi Youssef, Jamil Shammass and Saadeddin Khaled. With the latter the possibility of cooperation and the proposal of an Armenian candidate for the Evangelical seat was examined.⁸⁹ However, later on Khaled chose Fouad Issa to be the Evangelical candidate on his list.⁹⁰ On 4 August Fouad Makhzoumi visited the Sardarabad Club and agreed in principle with the Tashnag Central Committee on the appointment of an Armenian candidate for the Evangelical seat.⁹¹ Other visitors were Elias Khazen, Mahmoud Aouad, Ghada Yafi, Jamal Hermez, and Ittihad party chief Rafik Mrad who promised to support the unity candidates.⁹²

Meanwhile, in Anjar, a popular festivity was held on 29 July. Among those present were Minister Nazarian, MPs Skaff, Khalil Hraoui, Mohsen Dalloul, Nicolas Fattouche, Mohammad Meis, Hovnanian, Joukhadarian and Kassardji, under whose auspices the festivity was held. After Giragos Kiledjian's opening speech in Arabic, Bedros Shemmassian spoke in Armenian, as well as deputy Kassardji.⁹³

Diar mentioned on 4 June that Bourdj Hammoud Businessman's Union president Paul Ayanian would be a candidate in the election. He promptly denied this, cutting short all such speculations.⁹⁴

One of the first early Armenian candidates was Raffy Madeyan. On 4 July he visited Catholicos Aram I at the summer residence of the Catholicosate in Bikfaya,⁹⁵ and on July 18 he visited Armenian Catholic Patriarch Nerses Bedros XIX, in the presence of Bishop Vartan Ashkarian.⁹⁶

In the North Metn electoral district, it was announced that former president Amin Gemayel intended to return from Paris, where he had lived for over a decade, after positive public declarations from president Lahoud, speaker Berry, premier Hoss and justice Minister Joseph Chaoul, as well as MPs. His return would strengthen the chances of his son, Pierre Gemayel, who intended to run for a seat.⁹⁷

L'Orient-le Jour wrote Nassib Lahoud might conclude an alliance with Albert Moukheiber and Pierre Gemayel. His list would also include Michel Samaha, Auguste Bakhos and an Armenian Orthodox, Raffy Madeyan or former deputy Yerevanian.⁹⁸ He would leave one Maronite seat and one Greek Orthodox seat vacant on his list. However, Gemayel preferred to run independently.⁹⁹

In Beirut, efforts to form a united Hariri-Salam list failed. Hariri and Salam met in Koraytem, Hariri's residence. A list composed of Salam, Mohammad Mashnouk, Mohammad Berjaoui, Beshara Merhej, Yeghia Djeredjian, Nabil de Freije was discussed. No agreement was reached as Salam wanted the Greek Orthodox seat vacant in order to let Najah Wakim and Merhej fight for it. Hariri had insisted on a complete list. So both Sunni leaders started the formation of separate lists.¹⁰⁰

Meanwhile, Nazar Najarian,¹⁰¹ was actively working for his candidacy for the Beirut III Armenian Catholic seat. He was assumed to be a supporter of the late Beshir Gemayel and pro-Tashnag in his outlook. He described himself as belonging to the "generation of change and development." He met electors in Ain el Mreysse and the met moukhtars of Ras Beirut and Ain el Mreysse.¹⁰² He met some Armenian families of Mudawar and Zokak el Blat. He praised the efforts made by the Tashnag party to unify the Armenian ranks for the legislative elections.¹⁰³

Another active Armenian Catholic candidate was lawyer Serge Toursarkissian, born in 1965, who had been in the profession law since 1988, and had represented the Armenian Catholic university students, and was a member of the Economical Council of the Armenian Catholic patriarchate.¹⁰⁴

Patriarch Nerses Bedros XIX, however, declared he was at an equal distance from all candidates of the Armenian Catholic seat.¹⁰⁵

Hariri declared his "Beirut Dignity" lists, in all three Beirut electoral districts on 30 July in a popular meeting at his Verdun electoral headquarters.¹⁰⁶

Beirut I- Hariri, Adnan Arakji (Sunnites), Michel Pharaon (Greek Catholic), Ghattas Khoury (Maronite), Atef Majdalani (Greek Catholic) and Basel Fleihan (Protestant).

Beirut II- Bechara Merhej (Greek Orthodox), Yeghia Djeredjian (Armenian Orthodox), Walid Eido, Bassem Yammout (Sunnites) and Nabil de Freije (Maronite).

Beirut III- Mohammad Kabbani, Ghinwa Jalloul (Sunnites), Ghazi Aridi (Druze), Nasser Kandil (Shiite), Jean Oghassabian, Hagop Kassardjian (Armenian Orthodox), and Serge Toursakissiam (Armenian Catholic).

Hariri, who had allied with speaker Berry's Amal movement in Beirut III, did not put a Shiite on his Beirut II list but left the position vacant, thus favoring the election of Hezbollah's Berjaoui on Salam's list. Hariri also had allied with Walid Jumlat, putting on his list Druze candidate Ghazi Aridi.

Zartouk published these lists in its 18 August issue saying tens of thousands of Lebanese were present in the Verdun meeting, including Ramgavar, AGBU-AYA, Huntchag and Armenian Catholic Union and other organization representatives.¹⁰⁷

Zartouk further wrote that till the late hours of 29 July, Hariri was in contact with the Tashnags for a possible agreement to form a pan-Armenian group of candidates for his list, but "unfortunately that agreement had not been realized and the list was sealed that night."¹⁰⁸

Aztag gave the information on page one.¹⁰⁹

Tamam Salam reacted and said Hariri had put an end to all efforts to form a joint list.¹¹⁰

Simon Abou Fadel wrote an article in *Diar* which was translated and given a prominent place in *Aztag* on the next day. The article explained, relying on a Tashnag Party source, why the Tashnags had separated from Hariri. The article said distancing from Hariri had begun with his visits to Turkey and Azerbaijan while his visit to Armenia had not warmed the relationship. Hariri wanted to impose candidates on the Tashnag party, like Basil Fleihan for the Evangelical seat and Yeghia Djeredjian and Hagop Kassarian. Hariri asked the Tashnag Party to adopt these candidates and left them the choice of selecting one candidate; the party did not agree to this. The source said Catholicos Aram I had indicated Hariri might gain

some candidates but would lose a whole community. The Tashnag source told Abou Fadel that gaining the Ramgavars did not mean he had all the Armenian community with him.¹¹¹

On 3 August at Manara, 85 trees were planted in commemoration of the 85th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide in the presence of the three spiritual leaders of the three Armenian communities. This occasion gave the chance for the competing Armenian political leaderships to be seen in public at a common commemoration. Among those present were MPs

MPs Hovnanian, Dedeyan, Joukhadarian, Tabourian, and Djeredjian, as well as candidates Kassardjian, Oghassabian and Serge Toursarkissian. The presence of deputies Merhej, Arakji, Pharaon and Yetim was noted.¹¹²

The Huntchag inter-party conflict became bitter. The party Central Council and the newly appointed Lebanon Executive Body and the party daily *Ararad* opposed Yeghia Djeredjian. Despite the latter's expulsion from the Huntchag party, he was maintained on Hariri's list. There were bitter and degrading personal attacks in inter-party pamphlets from both sides circulating among the rank and file of the Huntchag party. Djeredjian, who was supported by Sebouh Kalpakian, chairman of the dissolved Executive Body, said "the affair was a conspiracy against him" as "some members wanted the nomination themselves." He claimed 85 percent of the party members and supporters of the party were with him. He further denied that the Central Council had expelled him, as he was a member of the council and was not aware of such a decision. He said the 8 members of the Executive Body of the party who chose him constituted a two-thirds majority of the 12 present. Kalpakian, in his turn, said the Central Council did not have the power to expel Djeredjian, and the World Congress of the party, which elected the Central Council, was the only body with the prerogative. However, the latter had not taken such a step.¹¹³

On 4 August it was reported that Hoss had postponed the declaration of his list as the Armenian groups headed by the Tashnag Party had not yet come to an agreement on deciding their candidates.¹¹⁴ *Ararad* announced that as soon as the Huntchag and Tashnag parties presented the names of the Lebanese Armenian concord candidates, Hoss would announce his list.¹¹⁵

Finally on 7 August *Ararad* and *Aztag* published a joint communiqué of the Huntchag Executive Body and the Central Committee of the Tashnag party, both of Lebanon.¹¹⁶ In it they said the Armenian political parties had been meeting for months to present a joint Armenian concord list, but before the formation of an inter-party agreement, the Ramgavar Azadagan party was engaged in electoral agreements and broke this unity. Due to this undue haste, the Ramgavar Azadagan party suffered an internal

organizational crisis due to which the party's Lebanon District Council resigned.¹¹⁷ But the inter-party meetings were continued. After consultations with the Armenian spiritual leaders, denominations, public organizations and unions they succeeded in maintaining Armenian unity intact in order to serve the Lebanese fatherland with a national independent face. The following candidates were selected:

Bekaa electoral district, Georges Kassardji, Armenian Orthodox seat, non-partisan.

Beirut I, Apraham Dedeyan, Evangelical seat, non-partisan.

Beirut I, Mihran Seferian, Armenian Orthodox seat, Huntchag Party member.

Beirut III, Hagop Pakradouny, Armenian Orthodox seat, Tashnag Party member.

Arthur Nazarian, Armenian Orthodox seat, AGBU member.

Stepan Abadjian, Armenian Catholic seat, non-partisan.

Metn electoral district, Sebouh Havnanian, Tashnag Party member.

The above communiqué was announced in the Sardarabad Club on 6 August.

Both newspapers gave brief biographies of each candidate and a group picture of the Armenian Unity Front list.¹¹⁸ Furthermore *Ararad* printed a picture of candidate Seferian highlighting his biography.

Mihran Seferian, born in 1963 in Beirut, studied in the AGBU Hovagimian-Monougian school and graduated from Armenia's Polytechnic Institute's radio-communications division as an engineer. From 1984 to 1991 he was the Huntchag Student Committee chairman in Yerevan and also the president of the Lebanese Students Union in Soviet Armenia till 1989. He returned to Lebanon and was on the Huntchag Executive Body of Lebanon.

Hagop Pakradouny, born in 1956 in Beirut, studied in the Souren Khanamirian College and graduated with a BA, then an MA in political sciences from the American University of Beirut. He was pursuing his studies for a doctoral degree. He was the principal of the Souren Khanaminian College and a member of the Tashnag Party.

Arthur Nazarian, born in 1951 in Beirut, studied in International College and followed university studies in the USA. He was a member of the AGBU and from 1998 Minister of Tourism and Environment in the Lebanese government of Hoss.

Stepan Abadjian, born in 1943 in Bourdj Hammoud, studied in the Roussoul School and took a diploma in business from Belgium. He was an industrialist.

Zartonk said, after a difficult birth, the candidates under Tashnag's auspices were presented. The Tashnag called their list Armenian Unity Front, which was not reflected by its contents, as all of the Huntchags were not represented, nor the AGBU, despite Nazarian's AGBU membership.¹¹⁹

During a luncheon in Bickfaya's Ain El Delb restaurant, AGBU's Armenian Youth Association Central Council Chairman, Garo Jeghelian, endorsed candidates Kassardjian, Djeredjian, Toursarkissian and Oghassabian. He said Kassardjian was an AGBU veteran member, Djeredjian was a graduate of the AGBU Hovagimian School and Oghassabian felt close to AYA. He added that AGBU was apolitical, but, as Lebanese citizens all must participate in the elections. He said they encouraged and wished success to all AGBU members who were candidates.¹²⁰

The *Daily Star* headlined "Tashnag drops Beirut ally and names Nazarian." The reference was to deputy Joukhadarian.¹²¹ The next day the newspaper further elaborated, "Joukhadarian was believed to enjoy support from Hariri but was torn over whether or not to run on the powerful Beirut MP's candidate list." Joukhadarian diplomatically said he "did not know why the Tashnag Party dropped him, but said that he was certain the reasons behind the decision were not personal." He said he would not run in the election and would abide by the party's decision.¹²² *Aztag* also gave the latter information on 9 August.¹²³

The *Daily Star* wrote Joukhadarian's replacement, Abadjian, was "a virtual unknown on the political scene" adding that according to Armenian sources Joukhadarian's exclusion "was because of his close relations with Hariri". The paper added that prior to 30 July Hariri had no Armenian Catholic candidate and "was planning to arrange that Joukhadarian somehow remain in parliament."¹²⁴ However as Hariri did not reach an agreement¹²⁵ with the Tashnags, he chose Toursarkissian to be his candidate.

Once the Armenian candidates of the Unity Front were known, both Hoss and Salam announced their lists.

Hoss's candidates in Beirut III were himself (Sunnite), Ahmad Tabbara (Sunnite), Mohammad Youssef Beydoun (Shiite), Issam Naaman (Druze), , Stepan Abadjian (Armenian Catholic), Arthur Nazarian and Hagop Pakradouny (Armenian Orthodox). The list was called "National Work".¹²⁶

Salam's list in Beirut II was led by himself (Sunnite), Mohammad Mashnouk (Sunnite), Mohammad Berjaoui (Shiite), Mihran Seferian (Armenian Orthodox), and Habib Ephrem (Maronite). He left the Greek Orthodox seat vacant on his list called "The National Consensus list".¹²⁷

In Beirut I, on 10 August a list was formed by Fouad Makhzoumi himself (Sunnite), Michel Sassine (Greek Orthodox), Antoine Qlimos (Maronite), Muhieddine Doughan (Sunnite), Jean-Pierre Haddad (Greek Catholic), and Apraham Dedeyan (Protestant). This list was called "Sons of Beirut."¹²⁸

After the Armenian Unity Front list was declared, Nazar Najarian, in a meeting with journalists in Hotel Gabriel on 10 August announced his withdrawal from the election, as his candidacy was not supported by the Tashnag Party.¹²⁹ *Aztag* wrote, in withdrawing his candidacy Najarian supported the Front.¹³⁰ Similarly Meguerditch Bouldoukian, through a declaration issued on 11 August, withdrew his candidacy and announced his active support in Beirut and other electoral districts of the Armenian Unity Front.¹³¹ On 19 August *Aztag* announced that Haigaz Yardemian (brother-in-law of Hagop Kassardjian) said in a written statement that despite some offers that he present his candidacy for the Protestant seat, he continued to support the Armenian Unity Front candidates and especially Dedeyan.¹³²

Antoine Neshanakian, Beirut II Armenian Orthodox independent candidate, also telephoned the Tashnag Central Committee and informed them that he accepted the Tashnag Party decision and would withdraw his candidacy and support the Unity Front.¹³³ Indeed on 21 August Dr. Neshanakian, who had run unsuccessfully in the previous elections in the Bekaa, withdrew his candidacy. He declared he was eager to keep the ranks of the Lebanese Armenians united. *Aztag* gave a prominent place to his declaration.¹³⁴

Hoss and Salam lashed out at Hariri. The Prime Minister said "political money" and biased media were harming the elections."¹³⁵ Salam in his turn lashed out at the former Prime Minister's "alleged heavy spending on his campaign."¹³⁶

Najah Wakim pulled out of the elections in protest against "pre-packaged results". His decision shocked his supporters.¹³⁷ A Huntchag Executive Body delegation asked him to reconsider his withdrawal.¹³⁸

Saadeline Khaled, the son of the former Mufti of the Republic, Sheikh Hassan Khaled, announced his list in Beirut I. It included himself (Sunnite), Georges Shehwan (Maronite), Jack Tamer (Greek Orthodox), Fouad Issa (Protestant) and Najib Lian (Greek Catholic), leaving one Sunnite slot vacant.¹³⁹

Public meetings were held by the three main lists of Hariri, Salam, and Makhzoumi. Hariri held a meeting in Caracas in Ras Beirut,¹⁴⁰ Salam in Aishé Bakkar, Khaled at Abou Shaker Square.¹⁴¹

Zartong under the headline of “conclusive exposures” asked “what has happened that today unity is shaken or why did the Tashnags delay the declaration of their list?”. The Ramgavar daily wrote that unity was broken not because Hariri wanted to impose an Arab candidate for the Protestant seat, and proposed Kassardjian and Djeredjian as candidates, but because the Tashnags could not agree to any decision or agreement not made by themselves. The Tashnags knew very well the “fate of the Protestant seat, so they should have defended it beforehand (i.e. in the parliament)”. The Tashnags exploited the dissensions within the Huntchag Party and wanted to join the Ramgavar to their unity list. The paper then revealed that the Huntchags had proposed replacing Seferian with Souren Khanamirian, but the Tashnag Party had refused. The Tashnag Central Committee representative had proposed Ara Yerevanian to be a concord candidate, but Yerevanian had refused, as he saw no concord and unity among Armenian candidates. The Tashnags had requested Catholicos Aram I’s intervention with Yerevanian, who had remained firm on his position, as the seat proposed to him in Beirut II was against another Armenian candidate (i.e. Djeredjian). Yerevanian had counter-proposed to put his candidacy in Metn, which the Tashnag Party had refused. Under such circumstances the Tashnags had accepted Seferian and had added him to their list to create a false unity front.¹⁴²

Zartong wrote on 10 August “Where is the Unity Front, when the Tashnags, instead of one representative had two candidates for the first time in Lebanese legislative elections; when the Huntchags, divided, had two opposing candidates, one subject to the Tashnag Party; when the Ramgavars had one candidate with the departure point that unity can not be by subjugation; when the AGBU, which did not officially have or propose any candidate, saw one of its leaders on the Tashnag Party list.”¹⁴³

On 12 August *Zartong* published a communiqué signed by the Huntchag Executive Body of Lebanon and the Ramgavar Azadagan Lebanon District Council saying that, “Lebanese Armenian life was troubled by false accusations, which aimed at keeping the Armenian masses misinformed for narrow electoral gains”. So they brought to the attention of the Armenian public the following points.¹⁴⁴

1. The attempts aimed at dividing the Ramgavar ranks have been neutralized, and Kassardjian has been proposed by united ranks.

2. The group divided from the Huntchag party represents hardly 10 percent of the party. The official candidate of the party remains Dr. Djeredjian.

3. The Huntchag and Ramgavar parties support in all Beirut electoral districts the complete success of the Dignity List, on which are the young and able candidates Toursarkissian and Oghassabian.

4. The Huntchag and Ramgavar parties are concerned about the Armenian Bloc's short sightedness and indecisive stand towards the new electoral law, according to whose stipulations the Evangelical seat was placed in Beirut I, damaging its Armenian character.

5. The Huntchag and Ramgavar parties condemn the Tashnag tendency to domineer, due to which it was not possible to form an Armenian united front.

6. On the basis of the inter-party agreement formed during the 1996 elections, the three parties cooperated with Prime Minister Hariri. It was the Tashnags who took a separate stand and the responsibility falls on them.

7. Finding scapegoats to escape responsibility and creating non-existent enemies will not save the Lebanese Armenians. To show enmity towards people who have shown respect for and praised Armenians (for narrow electoral interests) does not serve the interests of the Lebanese Armenians.

8. The cheap propaganda measures and style of the Tashnag Party are to be condemned. Living in a democratic country all have the right to express their views within the law.

9. We appeal to our compatriots to participate in the elections, for which electoral cards must be secured.

In a communiqué, on the same day in *Ararad*, the Huntchag Party Lebanon Executive Body's Press and Information Bureau, denied that their candidate Seferian had been arrested and that his candidacy had been refused. They termed the information unfounded and untrue.¹⁴⁵ On the same day, as announced in *Ararad*, Sebouh Kalpakian was expelled from the Huntchag party ranks "for his undisciplined and anti-party action" by the Party Lebanon Executive Body, whose decision was approved by the party's Central Council.¹⁴⁶

On 17 August the Press and Information bureau of the Huntchag Party Lebanon Executive Body, in a communiqué published in *Ararad* entitled "An official verification", said they had read with astonishment in *Zartonk* a communiqué where there was the signature of the "Huntchag Party Lebanon Executive Body" beside the Ramgavar Lebanon District Council. They added there were not two Huntchag Executive Bodies. The only legal Executive Body, confirmed by the party Central Council, had not authorized anyone nor itself to sign and issue such a communiqué. It was regrettable that the friendly Ramgavar Party and its organ had given a

place to expelled persons who were subject to disciplinary punishment and had taken the position of an "Executive Body". The persons who constituted this body were irresponsible and damaging elements. The Ramgavars who had had long years of political and friendly ties could have ascertained by asking an explanation from the Party Central Council and exposed the insincerity and illegitimacy of the group. In February, the Ramgavar chairman had refused to recognize the legality of any Huntchag body, without the Huntchag Central Council and its chairman's confirmation. It was strange that they were not taking into account the Huntchag Party Central Council decision. The party's candidate was Seferian. The Ramgavars did not wish Armenian unity. In March-April the Ramgavar Central Council had decided in favour of the Dignity List, maintaining that the latter's success was indisputable. The same confidence was recommended by Yeghia Djeredjian, who had won Hariri's "confidence" by "faithful subjugation," and had been accepted by him, despite the decision of his party, whose by-laws he had approved. It was not allowed that the Ramgavars hurt the Huntchags when they said the Huntchags and Ramgavars supported the Dignity List in the three electoral districts of Beirut. They could have written the Ramgavar party and expelled Huntchags."¹⁴⁷

Local Arabic language newspapers had indicated the possibility of the candidacy of the wealthy Armenian businessman and London resident Varoujan Yeghishé Manoukian as a candidate in Metn. However, it was rumoured that the Tashnag Central Committee in Lebanon had said Dr. Hovnanian would be their choice this time, without ruling out Manoukian's candidacy at another time.

The Metn lists were announced in mid-August. Opposition candidate Nassib Lahoud declared his list on 13 August.¹⁴⁸ It included himself (Maronite), Auguste Bakhos, Walid Khoury (Maronites), Michel Semaha (Greek Catholic), Riad Abou Fadel (Greek Orthodox), and Raffy Madeyan (Armenian Orthodox).¹⁴⁹

Lahoud hoped that due to Madeyan, electoral delegates could be more numerous at Bourdj Hammoud polling stations.¹⁵⁰ Madeyan did not have much of a following there. His pictures were torn down by municipality workers according to *Gantch*.¹⁵¹ Madeyan hoped 33,000 Armenian voters out of Metn's estimated 152,000 eligible voters "would prove wrong all those who accuse the community of always siding with the regime."¹⁵²

Lahoud could not get the influential candidate Albert Moukheiber on his list, despite a three-month-long effort. He also left the fourth Maronite seat on his list vacant "to improve the chances of independent candidate Pierre Gemayel", who did not wish to be on his list.¹⁵³

On 15 August Michel Murr announced his pro-government "Metn Concord List" led by himself (Greek Orthodox), Ghassan Ashkar, Chaker Abou Sleiman, Emile Emile Lahoud, Mounir Hajj (Maronites), Antoine Haddad (Greek Catholic), and Sebouh Hovnanian (Armenian Orthodox).¹⁵⁴

He had included on his list the Syrian Popular Party and Tashnag Party candidates, as well as the son of the President of the Republic. The latter's daughter was married to his son.

The Tashnag Party, while presenting the candidacy of Hovnanian without public announcement, also presented the candidacy of Garabed (better known as Garo) Ohannessian (Hovanessian), principal of the Sophia-Hagopian College.¹⁵⁵ This was their usual precautionary measure, in case of a mishap to their main candidate.

As the election date approached, each list organized a number of public meetings and visits.

The Tashnag Party Karekin Njteh Committee organized a public meeting on 11 August at the Kevork Harboyan School campus of the Zalka St. Cross Armenian Catholic Church. Ahmad Tabbarra, representing Premier Hoss, noted the fact that his grandfather was hanged by the Turks in 1915. This spoke for itself, and he needed no introduction to the Armenians. Interior Minister Murr said the Tashnag Party would emerge victorious from the elections.¹⁵⁶

A succession of meetings followed the Zalka meeting: in Anjar at the Hamazkayin club, in the presence of the People's List of Skaff;¹⁵⁷ on 14 August in the Fanar popular building area;¹⁵⁸ on 16 August at Rawda;¹⁵⁹ on 16 August at the Arin Center in Bourdj Hammoud, in the presence of an audience of 3000;¹⁶⁰ in Medawar at the Sleep Comfort's hall, in the presence of an audience of 500;¹⁶¹ on 17 August at the Torossian Armenian Evangelical School;¹⁶² on 18 August at Karm el Zeitoun near the Tashnag Club in the presence of Makhzoumi's list member and Nazar Najarian.¹⁶³ During the 21 August meeting held near the Bourj-Hammoud Municipality field, Djinbashian, speaking in the name of the Tashnag Party, said their opponents wanted to prove that others outside the Armenian political parties could head the Armenians and added there would be no such leadership outside Armenian unity.¹⁶⁴ The meetings continued to a crescendo. On the morning of 23 August the Lebanese Armenian Relief Cross held a meeting in the Riviera Hotel in the presence of an audience of 1000.¹⁶⁵ On the same day at night, 15000 people attended a public meeting in Bourdj Hammoud in the presence of Vahridj Djeredjian, president of the Huntchag Central Council, and Yervant Pamboukian, member of the Tashnag Bureau.¹⁶⁶ The Huntchag Masis club's Ladies held a gathering for candidate Seferian on 25 August.¹⁶⁷

Three dinners were held too. On 20 August, the Propaganda Committee of the Armenian Unity Front gave a dinner at Golden Beach, in the presence of 5000 invitees. The Front's candidates were present and speeches were made.¹⁶⁸ A more modest function was held for the Armenian Unity Front on 28 August at the Chatalbashian school in Eshrefieh.¹⁶⁹

The same Front organized a banquet at the Wave's complex on 29 August. Prelate Bishop Kegham Khatcherian, Bishop Manuel Batakian, and Rev. Dr. Paul Haidostian, respectively the spiritual leaders of the Lebanese Armenian Orthodox, Catholic and Evangelical Communities, were present as well as Armenia's ambassador Armand Navasartian, Benin honorary consul Ara Vanlian, and Bourdj Hammoud traders union president Paul Ayanian. Bishop Kegham, Rev. Haidostian and the Ambassador were among the speakers.¹⁷⁰

On 17 August the Armenian Unity Front candidates visited Catholicos Aram I.¹⁷¹ Earlier they had visited the Armenian Catholic Patriarch, Nerses Bedros XIX, the Prelate of the Armenian Orthodox Community and Rev. Meguerditch Karageozian, President of the Near East Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches and Rev. Dr. Haidostian, President of the Union's Central Council.¹⁷²

Seferian accompanied Salam on his visit to the Beirut Maronite prelate, Bishop Boulos Matar and Greek Catholic prelate Joseph Kallas.¹⁷³ On 23 August the Unity Front candidates visited Sheikh Abdel Amir Kabalan of the Shiite community¹⁷⁴ and on 28 August Mufti Mohammad Kabbani of the Sunnite community,¹⁷⁵ Rev. Selim Sahyoun, head of the Evangelical community, Archbishop Elias Aoude, prelate of the Greek Orthodox community and the Prelate of the Greek Catholic community, Kallas.¹⁷⁶

Significant visitors to the Tashnag Sardarabad Club included Syrian Popular Party leader Ali Kanso, Ghazi Aridi, Hassan Sabra, Mounir Hajj, Antoine Qlimos.¹⁷⁷ The Tashnag leadership in its turn visited the Hezbollah and Baas Party headquarters, and discussed electoral issues on 24 August.¹⁷⁸ The Huntchags in their turn visited the Hezbollah leadership.¹⁷⁹

On 28 August, Prime Minister Hoss visited Syrian president Bashar Assad in Damascus. On his way back, he met Gen. Ghazi Kanaan in Anjar and president Lahoud in Baabda.¹⁸⁰ Later he declared the Metn election result had proved the impartiality of the Lebanese government. He said money was used in the elections in an unprecedented manner, that the government was attacked by the opposition media, and that it was the duty of the state television TL to defend "the Lebanese state."¹⁸¹

The Mustaqbal (Future) television station of Hariri had regular Armenian language news casts. To counter this, on 23 August, late in the electoral campaign, the state TV station also started an Armenian language news program.¹⁸²

As for the Hariri camp, public meetings were more modest. The Dignity List members met on 9 August with the Kantari region Beirut Ladies Group, where Oghassabian spoke;¹⁸³ there was a Ras Beirut Ghazzaoui family gathering, where Kassardjian and Toursarkissian spoke;¹⁸⁴ a dinner was held at the Forum de Beirut for the lawyers and engineers of the Future Current.¹⁸⁵

Hariri inaugurated the Ararad Sports Union center on Khalil Badawi street in Rmeil in the presence of 500 people, despite the explosion of a bomb the day before at the club and the advice not to go there. Kassardjian, Oghassabian, Toursarkissian and Madeyan were present.¹⁸⁶ Ziad Kreydieh and his friends hosted a reception at the Carlton Hotel on 17 August,¹⁸⁷ while in Beshamoun, Beirut electors held a supper at Fadi Khatib's residence.¹⁸⁸ On 21 August Kassardjian gave a dinner in the Summerland Hotel in the presence of 600 people. In addition to the Armenian candidates of the Dignity List, the presence of others was noted: former minister and outgoing MP Hagop Demerdjian, MP Andre Tabourian (whose son was engaged to Kassardjian's daughter), MPs Pharaon, Diab, Merhej, Arakji, Metn candidate Madeyan, AGBU-AYA and Ramgavar leaders, Huntchag supporters of MP Djeredjian. Hariri and Kassardjian spoke.¹⁸⁹ A popular meeting organized by the Ramgavar Electoral Central Committee, took place in the Tekeyan Center on 23 August in the presence of most of the Dignity List candidates, many of them spoke to an audience of a few hundreds.¹⁹⁰

The Dignity List Armenian candidates paid several visits to notables including Mufti Kabalan on 11 August,¹⁹¹ Catholicos Aram I on 18 August¹⁹² and Armenian Catholic patriarch Nerses-Bedros XIX on 19 August.¹⁹³

Zartouk, in giving the news of the visit to the Catholicos, published the declarations of MP Djeredjian and the party chief Kassardjian. Djeredjian said Aram I told them the Armenian Church stands at an equal distance, from all the candidates and political parties.¹⁹⁴ Kassardjian said the Catholicos condemned the bombing of the Ararad Sports Union Club and other "unpleasant acts" of the past days.¹⁹⁵

The visit and the above statements were echoed in all the newspapers. On 21 August *Aztag*, upset by the statements that the Catholicos was at an equal distance from all candidates, published a communiqué by the Catholicosate under the title "Catholicos Aram I condemns allegations

made with bad intentions.”¹⁹⁶ The Communiqué was published in *Ararad* as well, but without comment.¹⁹⁷

The Catholicossate declaration did not deny outright what Djeredjian had announced but said the Catholicos suggested to the three Armenian political party leaderships to avoid the harmful atmosphere of the electoral campaign and change the style of the electoral campaign, which could create inter-party conflict after the election and for that matter, weaken internal unity, the collective will and the active participation of the community in Lebanese political life. Furthermore, the declaration noted that candidates and individuals were altering the Catholicos's statements or ascribing to him statements he did not make. The Catholicos, the communiqué concluded, stood firm on his 12 July appeal.

After visiting the Armenian Catholic patriarch, Kassardjian declared that the patriarch stood at an equal distance from all Armenian sides.¹⁹⁸

The Armenian Catholic patriarchate issued a verification to end the rumors about the Armenian Catholic candidates. It said that the patriarchate had not expressed himself in favor of any candidate and had decided to be at an equal distance from each, wishing success to the most worthy.¹⁹⁹

Nayiri, the Armenian weekly, whose editor Jirayr Nayiri (Tossounian), was a Huntchag leader and former editor of *Ararad*, did not campaign for any side, but its sympathies were clear. *Nayiri* wrote in an editorial entitled “with the flag of the interests of our community and the Lebanese fatherland...” “we are struggling for a free, united, integrated Lebanon, which is cordial with Syria, has prosperity and social justice and which is against neo-colonial-Zionist infiltrations, [a Lebanon] symbolized by president Lahoud and PM Hoss. International capitalism, through its local representative (i.e. Hariri), has launched a struggle against Lebanon. This person, relying on the power of money, is buying conscience and honour while discarding principles, and it is a shame to see people who claim to be holders of ideals sacrifice their principles for the god of money.”²⁰⁰

On 12 August the Central Committee of the Tashnag Party issued a communiqué, stressing that the party, as in the past, was working for Armenian unity and trying to maintain it in the legislative elections with the intention of pressing for one united front. The Ramgavar Party, in the person of Kassardjian, unilaterally left the unity list but could not break the unity ranks. It was wrong to say the Tashnag Party alone had appointed the unity front candidates. This was done in agreement with the Huntchag Party and enjoyed the blessing of the three Armenian community spiritual leaders. This step was taken to heed the advice of Catholicos Aram I, who had advised all to close the ranks not allow outsiders to interfere in the

internal affairs of the community, and remain above personal interests. The withdrawal of some Armenian candidates showed that the community's sons believe in unity.²⁰¹

In an article in *Aztag* Djinbashian wrote "we have no objections to Rafik Hariri's good qualities. We respect Mr. Hariri, we have cooperated with him in the recent past, and we do not exclude future cooperation. We don't condone the manner of his relationship with the Armenian community". The Ramgavar and self-styled Huntchag candidates, by agreeing first with Hariri, had not only struck a blow at Armenian unity, but had also given him the pretext for disregarding the will for Armenian unity and for remaining firm. He concluded "they say the Tashnag Party creates terror. We reply, yes, opponents have reason to be afraid of the Tashnag Party. The Tashnag Party does not cause dread by bullying, by forcing nor by demanding. The Tashnag Party causes dread by its presence, its participation and by the spirit of responsibility towards the nation, by whole-hearted work and devotion."²⁰²

The Tashnag stance on Hariri angered Berdj Sisserian, who had settled in Paris, as well as his brothers Hratch in Paris and Ara in Beirut, who worked for Hariri. The Sisserian brothers were either Tashnag Party former members, or sympathizers who were disillusioned by the party's electoral policy and treatment of Hariri. Berdj Sisserian's article entitled "Traitor and proud", was published on 23 August in *Zartonk*. It criticized the meaningless and out of place campaign against a close friend of the Armenian people, "Hariri, who had donated 500,000 dollars to the Armenian earthquake victims care of the pro-Tashnag Blue Cross. Hariri had also helped the Armenian schools of Lebanon under Tashnag control and Armenian university students. The article questioned how a partisan accused recently of theft had been appointed a candidate."²⁰³

On 23 August the representatives of the Tashnag Bureau, Huntchag Central Council, Tashnag Central Committee of Lebanon and Huntchag Executive Body of Lebanon met at the Shaghzoyan Center.

During this inter-party meeting it was confirmed that Armenian unity based on the Tashnag-Huntchag axis, was not limited to electoral purposes, but had national-political depth and would continue in that context. It was noted that all actions against unity had failed as the people trusted its parties. The large participation of Armenians to the Unity Front's public meeting showed that Lebanese Armenians maintained their collective healthy judgment and no political force would control the Armenian masses. The populace who supported the Armenian Unity Front in its meetings was requested to go to the polling stations on election day to turn the internal victory into an electoral victory.²⁰⁴

As the Metn election day was approaching, tension was increasing. The head of the Lebanese Communist Party National Council, Georges Haoui, stepfather of Raffy Madeyan, had talks with PM Hoss, after which he declared "if the freedom of the election and the safety of the polling stations in Bteghrin, Bourj Hammoud and other Metn areas is not respected, it will lead to serious complications". He declared Hoss had promised guarantees to all voters as they were suffering from all kind of pressures. These included daily tearing down of posters also mukhtars; mayors and public sector employees "were threatened with losing their personal property if they did not vote a certain way."²⁰⁵

The Daily Star gave a prominent place in its local news to Raffy Madeyan, as did to a lesser degree *l'Orient-Le Jour*. Madeyan said "he had received guarantees from high ranking political and security figures that illegalities would not be tolerated."²⁰⁶ *The Daily Star*, under the title "Madeyan shakes up Armenians", wrote that he had rejected the Tashnag Party concept of "consensus" and called for a radical change from its "isolation" policies. He added consensus doesn't mean just rallying around the Tashnag party and that the latter should demonstrate consensus itself before encouraging others to do so. He was referring to several changes of leadership in the past several years, in which factions supporting Hovnanian and other figures took turns ousting each other from the party leadership bodies.²⁰⁷

Madeyan claimed his support would come from Huntchag, Ramgavar parties, and AGBU as well as Metn leftist voters. The newspaper added Madeyan had visited all the towns and villages of Metn from Majdal Tarshish to Antelias, meeting people and discussing people's concerns as well as Lebanese national issues.²⁰⁸

During a public meeting organized by the Tashnag party in Bourdj Hammoud, where according to *The Daily Star* around 8000 people were gathered, Interior Minister Murr spoke. Murr called Madeyan (twice) a "little dwarf"; he said he got only 80 votes in Bourdj Hammoud in 1996. He denied his supporters had poured oil on posters, and added that he wouldn't pour oil on peoples posters but "I'd pour oil on the people themselves." He accused his rival's platform of "seeking to destroy everything the president [Emile Lahoud] has done" since his election. He also attacked Hariri.²⁰⁹

The next day a meeting was held at Nassib Lahoud's home for his Freedom List in Baabda in the presence of 1000 supporters. Madeyan said he refused to stoop to [Murr's] level and respond to the Minister's "vile words."²¹⁰

The Armenian Communist weekly published a picture of Madeyan, printed his electoral platform, and gave his biography, urging Metn Armenian voters to vote for Nassib Lahoud's Armenian candidate.²¹¹

The Daily Star wrote Murr had not given the lists of registered electoral card holders of Metn over 152,000 eligible voters. He had promised to post the lists by the evening of Saturday 26 August, just a day before of the opening of the 333 Metn polling stations on election day, Sunday 27 August. This left little time for campaign activists to check their accuracy. *The Daily Star* added "the 1996 vote-rigging techniques included dead citizens and immigrants who had not returned to the country in years casting ballots."²¹²

Prior to the elections Murr claimed that "the weakest vote getter on his list would be ahead of any in the opposition by 8000 votes, down from the 10,000 he had forecast the previous week," wrote *The Daily Star*.²¹³

Nassib Lahoud said government credibility was tarnished "when authorities unashamedly began tampering with election alliances, pressuring candidates toward some alliances and away from others. He said this in indirect reference to Albert Moukheiber, his former ally, who had been lured away from his list "by promises of votes from the Murr camp." Furthermore, he blamed the government for "using public-owned television to launch slander campaigns against opposition and independent candidates."²¹⁴

Both the Metn Accord List of Murr and the Freedom List of Lahoud had left one Greek Orthodox seat vacant on their lists to favor the election of Albert Moukheiber. Lahoud in a similar way had favored Pierre Gemayel.

Two smaller lists were formed. Albert Moukheiber had as his ally Hanna Abdo Chidiac (Maronite), while another list was composed of Nabil Lahoud, Paul Gemayel (Maronites) and Mitri Bitar (Greek Orthodox).²¹⁵ There was also another strong independent candidate, Sarkis Sarkis, who had done a lot of advertising.

On August 22 before the elections, PM Hoss held separate meetings with Interior Minister Murr, state prosecutor Adnan Addoum and Major General Jamil Sayyed, Director General of the General Security. Hoss intended to ensure the legitimacy of the election. Hoss discussed with Murr on how the Interior Ministry would "allow voters to practice their right to vote with freedom and transparency and without pressure or influences."²¹⁶

The elections in Metn were held as planned on Sunday 27 August in a very tense atmosphere, especially in Bourdj Hammoud and the coastal area.²¹⁷

The official results of the elected MPs were as follows.²¹⁸

Michel Murr	47,442
Emile E. Lahoud	37,413
Pierre Gemayel	35,998
Albert Moukheiber	34,211
Nassib Lahoud	33,499
Antoine Haddad	33,098
Sebouh Hovnanian	32,163
Ghassan Achkar	29,863

The votes obtained by those candidates who lost were as follows:

Michel Samaha	30,173
Chaker Abou Sleiman	29,399
Mounir Hajj	28,106
Raffy Madeyan	27,710
Riad Abou Fadel	23,305
Sarkis Sarkis	16,796
Auguste Bakhos	14,135
Walid Khoury	12,387
Boulos Gemayel	6526
Nabil Lahoud	4401
Hanna Chidiak	3904
Giselle Hashem	2955
Mitri Bitar	2608
Fady Gemayel	1500
Garabed Ohanessian	25
Ghazi Haddad	8

In an article in *L'Orient-Le Jour* headlined "Madayan, agressé, se déchaîne contre le Tashnag. Irrégularités en série à Bourj-Hammoud", Michel Hajj Georgio wrote about the electoral irregularities in the Armenian quarters.²¹⁹

He noted that in three polling stations (municipality of Bourdj Hammoud, the state school and St. Joseph church) Minister Murr's men barred the routes for the "Freedom List". The supporters of Madeyan could not come to a dozen voting stations or even enter the roads leading to them. In front of the internal security officers, Murr's men took the ballot on which Madeyan was listed out of the hands of voters and tore them to pieces. They asked the voters for whom they were going to vote and if it was for Lahoud's list, they would substitute a Murr ballot and accompany the reluctant voter till he placed the ballot in the polling box.²²⁰

Madeyan complained the Tashnag security officers tried to provoke a fight with his partisans in front of Shamlan-Tatigian school. They insulted

him and pushed him back to his car. In the Bourdj Hammoud municipality also Madeyan was attacked. He entered a complaint with the district attorney Fady Suwan, after which the army intervened in Bourdj Hammoud. According to AFP, four Tashnag supporters were arrested. Lahoud's press attaché, Antoine Haddad, qualified the "battle of Bourdj Hammoud" as "a veritable Far West" and condemned the absence of the army.²²¹

The Daily Star's Mona Ziade, under the title "political battle 'par excellence' in Metn. Rhetoric fuels violence in Bourj Hammoud," wrote: "Raffi Madeyan escaped injury when Tashnak Party activists twice attacked him and his entourage in the Armenian dominated area. Three of Madeyan's escorts were injured in fist fights, and one was clubbed on the head and sent to hospital". Ziade added "Another widespread complaint that was not restricted to Bourj Hammoud was polling station chiefs failing to sign the sealed envelopes of voters, risking the annulment of the ballots. At another station in Bourj Hammoud, [Michel] Samaha shouted at a host of campaigners to produce the permits required for their presence inside the booths. Two brandished theirs, several other headed straight for the door."²²²

The Daily Star, in an editorial entitled "National Disgrace" wrote "All decent Lebanese have already lost because bribery, fraud, intimidation and shameless interference by state officials seem to have reared their ugly head yet again this time." Murr who denied interference was strongly criticized. The newspaper said "dispite widespread reports that unpardonable violations of democratic principles were rampant. Once again, it is feared that literally thousands of votes were cast on behalf of people who are either dead or have not been here in years; many polling stations were invaded by police officers or were not equipped with curtains to protect voters' right to secret balloting; a mob of Tashnak Party backers assaulted an opposition supporter, a special printing press is said to have worked overtime to produce fraudulent voting cards; state employees are known to have contacted voters on behalf of candidates allied with the cabinet; votes were bought by officials who used cash; favors, and official translations and Murr's companion posters were plastered on polling station walls that were off limits to other candidates."²²³

Murr claimed the elections were well conducted administratively and security wise. The Minister minimized the incidents in Bourdj Hammoud, adding that no official complaint had reached him from candidates of Lahoud's List. He, however, underlined that an inquiry would be opened about the pistol that Madeyan had brandished despite the ban on gun

permits. He said his opponents had created provocations in Bourdj Hammoud to reduce the number of voter participation there.²²⁴

In the first post-election analysis of the Metn election *L'Orient-Le Jour*, under the headline "the votes of Bourdj Hammoud compromised the chances of success of Samaha and Madeyan," cited a comparison of results. While Samaha had 28,938 votes from all over Metn, except Bourdj Hamoud, against Haddad's 24,927 votes, and Madeyan had 26,773 against Hovnanian's 23572 votes. The Bourdj Hamoud results gave more than 8000 votes to Murr's list and both lost, Samaha with 2919 votes less than his rival and Madeyan with 4453 votes less than his opponent. Hovnanian had received 8564 votes and Madeyan 937 votes in Bourdj Hamoud.²²⁵ Within the Armenian areas of Bourdj Hamoud, Hovnanian had received 6387 votes and Madeyan 403.²²⁶

Samaha complained of irregularities in Bourdj Hamoud and Jdeide and suspected the existence of fraud. He said he was astonished that the № 57 polling box of Bourdj Hammoud was brought to the serail of Jdeide after midnight, while all the other boxes were there by 8 pm. He said this box had given him only 4 or 5 votes. He added, however, this particular box would not have influenced the final outcome.²²⁷ Nassib Lahoud also complained of irregularities in the voting process.²²⁸

On Monday 28 August *Aztag* gave the electoral victory news as follows, "Mount Lebanon and Northern Lebanon elections took place under normal conditions, Armenians voted with exemplary discipline and massively for Metn's Concord List. In Bourdj Hammoud Sebouh Hovnanian received 94 percent of the Armenian votes."²²⁹ The next day, when the official results had been proclaimed, *Aztag's* title was "The Armenian people gave its vote of confidence to the Armenian Unity Front. Brilliant victory of Sebouh Hovnanian in Metn."²³⁰

Ararad acclaimed "the Armenians of Metn massively voted for the Metn Concord List".²³¹ Later, *Ararad* wrote "the attempts to divide the Armenian Unity Front got their answer."²³²

Gantch published Faris Khachan's article in *Safir* under the headline "Raffy Madeyan was the first Armenian candidate who endangered Tashnag's exclusive rule." Khachan said the election results would negatively affect the Tashnag chances in Beirut's three electoral districts.²³³

Zartouk, which was more concerned with the Beirut election, complained that the Armenian denominations should take an impartial position. Two of them, the Armenian Evangelical and Orthodox, in a Tashnag public meeting had supported the latter's Armenian Unity lists, in speeches.²³⁴

On 30 August a huge meeting, organized by the Armenian Unity Front took place in the parking lot next to Shaghzoyan Center in Bourdj Hammoud. *Aztag* indicated 15,000 persons were present, as well as all the candidates of Hoss's, Salam's and Makhzoumi's lists, the Tashnag Bureau and Huntchag Central Council members. The meeting was transmitted live on the state television. The opening speech was by Georges Krikorian and had offensive words to Hariri.²³⁵ Other speakers were Hoss, Nazarian, Pakradouny, Kassardji, Huntchag Executive Body Representative Dr. Hagop Tossounian, Salam, Ephrem, Makhzoumi, Berjaoui, Tashnag Central Committee representative Garo Hovhanessian. The latter declared that in the last elections they had supported Hariri, but not this time as Hariri wanted to appoint the Armenian candidates.²³⁶

On 31 August Hariri held a restricted meeting with part of his electorate in the Riviera Hotel. He denounced what he termed "the nervous propaganda" of the Tashnag Party when speakers made hurtful and degrading comments about himself. He concluded "Beirut is with the Armenians but not with the Tashnag Party."²³⁷

In view of the widespread backlash and outcry, a communiqué dated 31 August and published on 1 September was issued. The Armenian Unity Front candidates and the Tashnag and Huntchag parties expressed their regrets for the opening speech's content and declared that the opinion and positions of the master of ceremonies did not reflect the political and electoral point of view and attitudes of the Armenian Unity Front. Furthermore they strictly condemned the hurtful and accusatory statements of the master of ceremonies. The communiqué said the Lebanese Armenian community would not use such measures and such a style to transmit its political views. In conclusion they said that in the electoral propaganda they would exercise utmost self-restraint.²³⁸

The communiqué did not dispel the ill-feeling created by the offensive expressions, particularly in the Beirut Sunnite community and especially as it was televised live.

Meanwhile *Zartouk* publicized the Armenian candidates of Hariri's lists, giving particular attention to Kassarian and Dr. Djeredjian, whose interview was published on 2 September, as well as the biographies and pictures of Oghassabian and Toursarkissian.²³⁹

On 1 September *Zartouk* published the translation of a communiqué by AGBU, which had been sent to all Arabic language newspapers. It stated that Nazarian, although a member of AGBU, was running his campaign on an individual basis and not in the name of AGBU. Secondly, Seferian had stated that the Ramgavar party had new dissensions, but this statement was not right, as the party leadership was united after their last dissensions.

The Ramgavar Party considers Hariri a friend and ally of AGBU and the Ramgavar Azadagan Party. Pakradouny's attempts to present the Tashnag Party as an official spokesman of all Armenians was a vain attempt to mislead the public opinion. The Armenian decision was not limited to one party, and the voters would express their views on election day.²⁴⁰

On 2 September *Zartong* published a communiqué signed by the Huntchag Executive Body of Lebanon, the District Council of the Ramgavar Azadagan Party and the Armenian section of the Lebanese Communist Party. It condemned the hand grenade thrown at the Ararad Club, the pressures put on Bourdj Hammoud voters on the Metn election day, the telephone calls and other types of threats on voters, the bullying in front of polling centers, the swearing used in the meeting of 30 August, and it noted that these do not bring honor to the Lebanese Armenians. The Lebanese Armenians have been advocates of peaceful coexistence and concord and showed it during the Lebanese civil war. All the Lebanese Armenian masses were faithful to these principles and did not share and irresponsible style of the Tashnag Party. The Lebanese Armenians were in favor of a balanced and broad-minded attitude, and invited Beirut voters to vote for Djeredjian in Beirut II and Kassardjian, Oghassabian and Toursarkissian in Beirut III.²⁴¹

Gantch headlined its 2 September issue with "Beirut Armenians defend the Lebanese Armenians' dignity despite the slogan of false unity, domination by one party and opportunism can only harm the Lebanese Armenians. What were the Prelate and the ambassador doing in a public meeting?". The weekly also gave the brief biographies of Beirut's "Armenian democratic candidates", as it termed the Armenian candidates of the Dignity List.²⁴²

Gantch criticized the Prelate of the Armenian Orthodox community, Bishop Khacherian, and the Armenian Ambassador, Armand Navasartian, who should not have taken sides by attending a meeting held under the auspices of Murr and organized by the Tashnag Party.²⁴³

The Huntchag Party Lebanon Executive Body's *Ararad*, denounced the signature, on the communiqué published by *Zartong*. They said "the only legal Executive Body is that which is under the auspices of the Party Central Council."²⁴⁴ The same Press and Information Center, replied to *Gantch*, that its information on the Huntchag Party's participation in the elections was "not honest and not fit from a friendly organ." *Gantch* had earlier written that the Tashnag Party had been the cause of the Huntchag party division. They refuted it and added the Huntchag Party was not divided; there was a legitimate Central Council and legitimate District Council and a small group who had been excluded for not accepting the

party line. Yeghia Djeredjian is not the Huntchag candidate and when *Gantch* indicated he was, it disregarded the party's official declarations. The Tashnag Party had not decided on Seferian's candidacy; the party had decided who would be its candidate and that was the point of conflict with Hariri, who wanted to decide who the party candidate would be. The Armenians who were on Hariri's list, if elected, they would owe allegiance to their chief, Hariri prior to their parties.²⁴⁵

Arabic leaflets were distributed in Beirut by the Armenian Unity Front requesting voters not to do away with genuine Armenian representation, to vote for those who represented 85% of the Armenian community, and vote for Nazarian, Pakradouny, Abadjian, Seferian and Dedeyan.

In a communiqué dated 22 August published in *Diar*, *Safir*, *Mustaqbal*, *Nahar* and *Bayrak* The Armenian Popular Movement, which did not have many followers, said they had no preferences and left their members the choice of participating in the elections and voting for whomever they "considered the best and most suitable."²⁴⁶

The elections of Beirut were held on Sunday 3 September 2000 in a calm atmosphere. There were a few minor incidents. Out of a total of 397,553 registered voters only 141,730 voted.

The official results were as follows²⁴⁷

Beirut I

Sunnites:	Rafik Hariri	34,820
	Adnan Arakji	27,943
	Fouad Makhzoumi	14,135
	Saaddeddine Khaled	6,255
	Mohhieddine Doughan	4,943
	Hisham Khalife	1,791
	Mohammad Baasiri	1,742
	Ghada Yafi	1,286
	Omar Zein	819
	Mohammad Arab	578
	Roula Alhoury	151

Maronite:	Ghattas Khoury	29,717
	Masoud Ashkar	7,963
	Antoine Qlimos	5,045
	Ghassan Matar	2,735
	Georges Shahwan	1,402
	Fouad Metni	904
	Emir Habib Zoghbi	285
	Diab Azouri	114

Greek Catholic: Michel Pharaon	36,014	
Jean Haddad	4,678	
Daoud Issa	2,280	
Najib Lian	1,153	
Greek Orthodox: Atef Majdalani	32,807	
Michel Sassin	12,096	
Jacques Tamer	1,180	
Georges Haddad	1,001	
Georges Malik	490	
Protestant: Basil Fleihan	32,147	
Apraham Dedeyan	11,088	
Fouad Issa	1,508	
Beiut II		
Sunnites: Walid Eido	25,065	
Bassem Yammout	23,721	
Tammam Salam	13,856	
Abdallah Mashnouk	8,028	
Badr Tabsh	4,188	
Samir Knio	2,309	
Zuheir Obeidy	1,807	
Mouaffak Yafi	1,803	
Mohammad Daouk	1,450	
Issam Baadarani	388	
Ahmad Moumtaz	64	
Ahmad Yassine		15
Shiites: Mohammad Berjaoui	28,391	
Hassan Sabra	8,842	
Nohad Hadraj	2,386	
Zulfikar Issa	26	
Mohammad Saad	15	
Greek Orthodox: Bechara Merhej	28,067	
Ziad Kantis	4,967	
Khalil Brummana	3,455	
Armenian Orthodox: Yeghia Djeredjian	26,157	
Mihran Seferian	12,209	
Linda Matar-Pandjardjian	583	

Maronites: Nabil de Freije	26,351	
Habib Ephrem	10,541	
Jamil Shammas		3,039
Youssef Jebran	852	
Jemal Hermez	245	
Selim Zahra	70	

Beirut III

Sunnites: Ghinwa Jalloul	24,845	
Mohammad Kabbani	23,403	
Selim Hoss	12,987	
Adnan Traboulsi	6,572	
Ahmad Tabbarra	6,552	
Bahaeddine Itani	6,162	
Toufic el Kurdi	1,309	
Osman Itani	907	
Shaker Atriss	440	
Idriss Saleh	117	

Shiites: Nasser Kandil	28,887	
Mohammad Beydoun	12,190	
Rabah Abi Haidar	212	

Druze: Ghazi Aridi	27,117	
Issam Naaman	11,345	
Ghazi Mounzer	387	
Ismet Saab	225	

Armenian Catholic: Serge Toursarkissian	26,062	
Stepan Abadjian	13,267	

Armenian Orthodox: Hagop Kassardjian	26,233	
Jean Oghassabian	26,088	
Arthur Nazarian	13,628	
Hagop Pakradouny	13,183	

Members of Hariri's Dignity List in all three Beirut districts won, also Berjaoui of Salam's list, who was not contested by Hariri.

The headlines of the non-Arabic newspapers were as follows:

L'Orient-Le Jour: "Raz – de –marée Hariri à Beyrouth. Les candidates du Tashnag défaits, pour la première fois."²⁴⁸

The Daily Star: "Hariri conquers capital. Political earthquake: ex-premier wipes successor off electoral map."²⁴⁹

Zartonk, "the Ramgavar Azadagan Party has it's representative in the parliament. The complete, historic and honorable victory of the Dignity Lists. Kassardjian, Toursarkissian and Djeredjian state MPs."²⁵⁰

Aztag – "According to non-official results, in Beirut's three electoral districts the lists under the auspices of Hariri have succeeded."²⁵¹

Ararad: "the 18 candidates of the three lists in Beirut headed by Hariri have won."²⁵²

Before the elections the Minister of the Interior had indicated that in Beirut I out of 127,604 voters 67,000 (50%) had taken their electoral cards, without which they could not vote. In Beirut II out of 128,700 voters 68,000 (50-52%) had done so, and in Beirut III out of 149,130 voters 69,000 (50%) had taken their cards.²⁵³ After the elections the Minister declared the voters' turnout was as follows:²⁵⁴

Beirut I, Eshrefieh 30%, Mazraa 51%, Saifi 19%.

Beirut II, Museitbe 43%, Bashoura 39%, Rmeil 18%.

Beirut III, Ain el Mreissé 43%, Ras Beirut 39% Zokak el Blat 41%, Medawar 28%, Marfa 38%, Minet el Hosn 24%.

From the above it can be concluded that in the mostly Christian inhabited areas the voter turnout was very low and in the mostly Moslem inhabited areas it was relatively high.

Interesting statistics emerged that a lower percentage of Christians had voted than Moslems in all Beirut electoral districts as shown below.²⁵⁵

District	Moslem voters	Christian voters
Eshrefieh	47.4%	28.8%
Mazraa	53.1%	24.15%
Musseitbé	49.5%	19.4%
Bashoura	44.7%	10.5%
Zoka el Blat	39.9%	15.6%
Ras Beirut	53.7%	12%
Medawar	48.3%	22.4%
Ain el Mreissé	50.9%	11.8%
Marfa	39.2%	8.3%
Minet el Hosn	50.6%	14%

Among the communities the following results caught the attention of observers.²⁵⁶

Shiites in Zokak el Blat out of 15,427 registered voters 35.3% voted.

Greek Orthodox in Ras Beirut out of 4455, 14.7% voted.

Armenian Orthodox in Medawar out of 26,014, 23.9% voted.

Jewish voters in Minet el Hosn out of 5066, 5 voted, i.e. 0.1%

The number of Armenian voters was as follows:²⁵⁷

In Beirut I, out of 10,805 voters, 3096 voted (28%), 511 of whom for Hariri's list and 2359 for Makhzoumi's list.

In Beirut II, out of 13,098 voters, 2186 voted (16%), 452 of whom for Hariri's list and 1586 Salam's list.

In Beirut III, out of 36,301 voters, 7700 voted (21%), 1514 of whom for Hariri's list and 6009 for Hoss's list.

Thus 2477 Armenian votes were given to Hariri's lists and 9954 votes to the opposing lists.

Aztag, giving somewhat different numbers, claimed a total of 10,986 (84%) had voted for the Armenian Unity Front and 2080 (16%) for Hariri's lists.²⁵⁸

The Tashnag daily had written earlier that the Armenian Unity Front candidates had received 80 percent of the votes in the polling centers for the Armenian communities, but the Armenian votes were not enough in face of the other communities' votes to secure the success of the Front's candidates.²⁵⁹ The Huntchag daily, in its turn, wrote the overwhelming majority of the Armenian votes were given to the Front's candidates, but their fellow candidates could not secure enough votes. It added, in any case the number of Armenian MPs had been reduced to six, as the Armenians had lost the Protestant seat in Beirut I.²⁶⁰

The Daily Star reporter alleged Armenian Unity Front voters had substituted for the name of some candidates the names of Ghazi Aridi, Nasser Kandil, Adnan Traboulsi and Michel Pharaon. Both sides complained of mistakes in voter rolls, those mistakes sometimes numbering one tenth of the voters in a polling station.²⁶¹

On 4 September celebrations took place in the Tekeyan Center, in the presence of the newly elected MPs Kassardjian, Toursarkissian and Djeredjian. The presence of Madeyan was also noted. In a speech, Kassardjian stressed the spirit of cooperation between the Ramgavar and Huntchag parties. At the same time a Ramgavar delegation congratulated Hariri at his Kraytem residence.²⁶² Similarly a reception was held at the Homenmen Club to honour the victory of Djeredjian and the other Armenian candidates.²⁶³ The Huntchag Executive Body of Lebanon, in an announcement in *Ararad*, refuted it had organized any reception.²⁶⁴

Among those who congratulated Kassardjian at the Tekeyan Center were former MPs Ara Yerevanian and Dr. Nourijeane Demirdjian, Honorary Consul Ara Vanlian and Armenia's Ambassador Navasartian.²⁶⁵ Kassardjian later said Catholicos Aram I and Prelate Khatcherian had

congratulated him.²⁶⁶ In his manner Haygaz Yardemian congratulated Kassardjian, as well.²⁶⁷

Congratulatory letters and cables were published in *Zartouk*. A letter from the Ramgavar Azadagan East Coast of the USA and Canada District Council said the party had struggled in the Cold War days to have a representative in the Lebanese parliament and had not succeeded. The letter said they remembered how the late leader Meguerditch Messerlian had succeeded in the legislative elections [of 1943] but through state intervention had been left out.²⁶⁸

The elections in the Mohafazat of Bekaa were held on the same day as in Beirut. The number of registered voters on the electoral list in Zahle was 131,000, of whom 79,000 had taken their electoral cards (70%). The turnout in the Zahle electoral district on Election Day was only 35%.²⁶⁹

The official results were as follows:²⁷⁰

Mohsen Dalloul	32,117
Elias Skaff	28,467
Nicolas Fattouch	27,513
Georges Kassardji	27,027
Youssef Maalouf	26,493
Mohammad Ali el Meiss	25,737
Khalil Hraoui	24,013
Mikhael Debs	20,616
Walid Shoueiry	15,987
Fouad Turk	15,953
Ibrahim Shahin	12,657
Ali Mita	11,844
Elie Marouni	10,501
Toufic Hindi	8015
Tony Tohme	7643
Vartkes Chaparian	7486
Garbis Butchakjian	4010
Najah Kazoun	3005
Joseph Chamoun	2567
Kamel Meiss	2089
Hares Sleiman	1133
Shawki Elmistrah	734
Roger Debs	9

Dalloul, Skaff, Fattouch, Kassardji, Maalouf, Mohammad el Meiss and Hraoui were declared elected.

On 8 September an event was organized by the Armenian Orthodox Prelacy to honour former MPs Dr. Antranik Manougian and Dr. Melkon

Eblighatian, as well as Hratch Dasnabedian, a Tashnag leader and principal of the Melankton and Haig Arslanian College. Catholicos Aram I bestowed "Cilician Prince" medals on them, and on this occasion spoke about the elections. His speech was given in *Aztag*, *Ararad* and *Zartontk*. The Catholicos basically said, Lebanon is a country of liberties and democratic principles and the elections of the new parliament proved it. During the legislative election he was in Iran, Switzerland and Germany and did not closely follow the process, but he had made his appeal before the elections. Now that the elections were over, he stressed three points. First, the elected deputies and those who lost were the sons of the community and dear to him. So no one should come forth with the pride of victory or the weakness of defeat. Whatever the problems, we must respect the results. However, we would have liked the Armenian MPs to have been elected by the majority of the community's votes and enjoyed its confidence. We would have liked all the Armenian political organizations to have presented a united attitude, but it did not happen so. Second, the integrity and the maintenance of the unity of our community was imperative and vital. For parliamentary seats we should not weaken the strength of the community, its unity or collective will. Now that the elections were over "we should strengthen our community's internal unity". Third, he categorically refused the ghetto mentality as ascribed to the Armenian community and stressed the Lebanese Armenians' rights as citizens involved in the life of the country.²⁷¹

On 11 September the Armenian Bloc MPs Hovnanian, Tabourian, Kassardji and Dedeyan visited Catholicos Aram I and expressed their solidarity with the views he had publicly expressed.²⁷²

On 13 September Aram I received separately the visits of the Tashnag Central Committee and the Ramgavar Azadagan District Council led by MP Kassardjian. He stressed to his visitors the strengthening of Lebanon, the strengthening of its unity and complete, direct and balanced participation of all communities. As for the Armenian community, he said, participation and cooperation should be the guidelines in the life of the community. Lebanon is a country of liberties, and strong sides do not have the right to impose their views and direction on their environment.²⁷³

Kassardjian in his turn declared in *Zartontk* that the Ramgavar delegation went to see the Catholicos after the uneasiness that he had expressed. Kassardjian said it would have been better if the Catholicos had expressed the views he held post electorally before the elections were held. He said the Catholicos had pointed out that it would have been better if the Armenian MPs had been elected by the majority of Armenian votes. Kassardjian said this would be against the agreement of Taef, if it were to

be done in all the communities. We stated this, and the Catholicos showed comprehension. As to the concord of Armenians, the Catholicos promised to bring together the three Armenian political parties and independents to jointly examine matters of concern. The newly elected MP added that for the first time the three Armenian political parties and the independents were represented in the parliament and should do everything possible together.²⁷⁴

A few post-electoral positions were noted.

First, in *Ararad*, Avedis Razmig criticized Djinbashian's article of 3 August 2000 in *Aztag*, where the latter had written "that opportunities have not been missed to see the strength of the unbreakable link between the people and Tashnag Party. It is a link which has been strengthened by the service of the Tashnag boys, who were even ready to give their blood." The article had concluded that "there would be the occasion of the elections and it could be verified who was the master and protector of Armenians." Razmig asked who had permitted this party or given it the right to be owner of our people. This article was the first breach of the Tashnag-Huntchag alliance in the post-electoral period.²⁷⁵

Second, the Armenian Bloc held a meeting on 14 September in the presence of Minister Nazarian. In its communiqué the bloc congratulated all the elected and reelected MPs of all the regions and appealed to the newly elected Armenian MPs to join them in its works and activity.²⁷⁶

Third, Barouyr Yeretsian published an article in *Gantch*, where, he denied that the defeat of the Armenian Unity Front's candidates was a big blow to the supreme interest of the Lebanese Armenian Community. He wrote it was natural for the Armenians to side, according to their views, with opposing sides. Then he questioned what would have happened if all the Armenians had united in one front and had voted against Hariri's lists, whose victory was already secured, even without the Armenian votes. However with their participation on his lists and with votes given to his lists, the Dignity List's victory became more radiant.²⁷⁷

Fourth, when the Civil Council of the Armenian Orthodox Community led by Prelate Khacherian visited Catholicos Aram I, the latter stressed the present unhealthy situation should not have been created; that was why he had made his appeal before his departure to Iran. He said he would not have wanted the Armenian MPs be elected in this manner and style in such an atmosphere. All should avoid pride in victory or defeatism and should gather around the community structure. All should stay away from provocative and sometimes untrue and unacceptable statements in the press or elsewhere.²⁷⁸

Once the term of the parliament elected in 1996 came to an end, Premier Hoss resigned, and the newly elected MPs, in their consultations with President Lahoud, gave their consent for Hariri to be the new PM. A government of 30 ministers led by Hariri was formed on 26 October. Contrary to the Taef Agreement, instead of two, one Armenian Orthodox seat was allocated in the cabinet to Dr. Hovnanian of the Tashnag Party as Minister of Sports and Youth Affairs.²⁷⁹ This arrangement troubled the Armenians. The Tashnag Central Committee communiqué said it rejected the deprivation of rights of the Armenian community and that two Armenian ministers should have been included in the government; it demanded the rectification of this breach.²⁸⁰

On 28 October the president of the Huntchag Central Council, Vahridj Djeredjian, wrote an article in *Ararad* entitled "We reject this insult". He later asked the Tashnag Party and Hovnanian to refuse the ministerial post.²⁸¹ The Huntchag and Tashnag Lebanon leadership met on 27 October and condemned the disregard of the Armenian community and demanded rectification "without delay".²⁸² The Huntchag Party,²⁸³ the spiritual leaders of the three Armenian denominations,²⁸⁴ the Ramgavar Azadagan Party,²⁸⁵ and the Armenian members of the Dignity Bloc issued communiqués with the same purport.²⁸⁶ MP Kassardji asked Hovnanian to resign.²⁸⁷

In *Zartouk* Aghbashian criticized the only Tashnag MP and said if he demanded rights and was a man of principle, then he should not have taken part in the new government and should have resigned as his colleague Kassardji had demanded.²⁸⁸

Minister Hovnanian boycotted the cabinet meetings and refused to attend the parliamentary session, where the vote of confidence was given to Hariri. Kassardji denied his confidence, while the Armenian MPs of Hariri's list abstained.²⁸⁹ Later, on 4 December, the Tashnag Central Committee suggested that Hovnanian participate in the Cabinet's meetings after the positive comments expressed by the President and the Prime Minister in the cabinet's meeting of 29 November.²⁹⁰ On 7 December the Ramgavar District Council said there was no written commitment and only oral promises were made; it considered the Tashnag Party and Hovnanian totally responsible for the non-rectification of the Armenian representation and diminution of the community's rights.²⁹¹ On 22 December the Tashnag Central Committee examined the promises and declared the participation of Hovnanian did not mean disregard of Armenian rights and continued demanding a second Armenian minister.²⁹² On 1 February, a strike was held in Bourdj Hammoud in protest against the disregard of calls for the appointment of a second Armenian minister.²⁹³ On 31 May 2001 in his

speech in parliament MP Kassardjian alluded to the non-appointment of the second minister and hoped that promises would be honored.²⁹⁴

The disunity and division in the Armenian community started to heal. Hovnanian, who had said "the Beirut Armenian MPs represented the capital but not their own community"²⁹⁵ and was condemned by the newly elected Ramgavar Azadagan District Council for saying so,²⁹⁶ invited Hariri and his Bloc's Armenian MPs to the Lebanese Independence Day celebration organized by the Tashnag Party, saying "he has all appreciation and respect for the [Beirut Dignity] Bloc's Armenian MPs."²⁹⁷

The Huntchag Party held its 46th General Assembly for the Lebanon District on 3 February 2001, examined the inter-party crisis, and elected a new executive body, entrusting it with the task of reunifying the party ranks. By secret ballot Sebouh Kalpakian, Hovannes Oughourlian, Aharon Shekherdeman, Matsag Poladian and five others were elected. The communiqué was signed by Vahridj Djeredjian and Manuel Atamian.²⁹⁸

In November 2001 the Ramgavar Azadagan Party elected a new District Council in an attempt to reunify its divided ranks.²⁹⁹

On 18 April 2001 the three Armenian political parties met in the Sardarabad club and decided upon a joint commemoration of the 86th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.³⁰⁰

PARTIAL ELECTIONS OF METN IN JUNE 2002

Another expression of the regained unity within the Armenian community was Armenian participation in the partial elections in the Northern Metn electoral district. Due to the death of MP Albert Moukheiber, the Greek Orthodox seat was vacant and partial elections were announced for 2 June 2002.

On 20 May the spiritual leaders of the three Armenian denominations invited Lebanese Armenian voters of North Metn to participate in the elections, defend the rights of the Armenians and express their collective will.³⁰¹ Another communiqué in similar lines was published on 29 May by the three spiritual leaders.³⁰²

On 26 May 2002 the Huntchag, Tashnag and Ramgavar Azadagan Lebanon leadership representatives met at the Yeravanian Center and issued a joint communiqué stating that the Lebanese Armenian community put the interests of Lebanon above all. Those who were discontented with their unified stands should put their efforts and abilities into the construction of the country and not incite inter-communal tensions.³⁰³

All three Armenian political parties declared their active support for the candidacy of Myrna Michel Murr, sister of the Minister of Interior

Elias Michel Murr and daughter of MP Michel Murr, and publicized her candidacy in their newspapers and worked for her success.

The other candidates were Gabriel Murr (brother of Michel Murr and uncle of Elias and Myrna Murr) and Ghassan Moukheiber, a close relative of the late deputy, Albert Moukheiber. Gabriel Murr was supported by Gen. Aoun, Nassib Lahoud and the opposition.

Gantch was against supporting one candidate and considered the appeal of the Armenian spiritual leaders a mistake, when they had stressed the need for a unified vote.

The Communist weekly claimed that after Michel Murr visited the Ramgavar and Hentchag leadership they joined the Tashnags in supporting Myrna Murr.³⁰⁴

In an appeal to its supporters the Ararad Sports Union asked them to vote, without specifying for whom. However as Madeyan was supported by them in the elections of 2000 and as Madeyan had declared on Gabriel Murr's MTV, his support for him, it was clear that they supported Gabriel Murr.³⁰⁵

There were 155,155 eligible voters in Northern Metn of whom 33325 (21.5%) were Armenian.³⁰⁶

The elections were held in a tense atmosphere but calm prevailed in Bourdj Hammoud. The Minister of Interior deployed units of the internal security forces all around Bourdj Hammoud. "in order to prevent Pierre Gemayel, Georges Haoui and Raffy Madeyan fomenting trouble"³⁰⁷ *L'Orient-Le Jour* wrote "although irregularities did not completely disappear, they were not as flagrant as in the past."³⁰⁸

There was some confusion in the electoral results. One ballot box from Hemlaya was brought in at the last minute, which made Myrna Murrs' tiny lead recede. The official results were Gabriel Murr 34,894, Myrna Murr 34,891 and Ghassan Moukheiber 1700.³⁰⁹

According to statistics published in *Nahar*, out of 8664 Armenians in North Metn, 6993 had voted for Myrna Murr and 1625 for Gabriel Murr. While in Bourdj Hammoud, all communities taken together, out of 9832 voters 7678 had voted for Myrna Murr and 2814 for Gabriel Murr.³¹⁰

The Minister of Interior declared Gabriel Murr to be the winner, but Myrna Murr appealed to the Constitutional Court. The latter, after some time, declared Ghassan Moukheiber to be the MP for North Metn, citing many legal reasons and in order not to hold new partial elections.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ This study is the eighth in a series of articles by the same author on Armenian participation in successive Lebanese legislative elections since 1934. The first seven articles in this series were published in volumes 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27 and 28 of the *Haigazian Armenological Review*.
- ² Denise Atalla, in *Safir*, Beirut, as translated in *Gantch* weekly, 10 July 1999, p. 2.
- ³ *Aztag*, 73rd year, Beirut, 14 March 2000.
- ⁴ *Ararad*, 63rd year, Beirut, 16 April 2000, № 105(16991).
- ⁵ *Zartonk*, 63rd year, Beirut, 18 February 2000, № 37(17736).
- ⁶ *Gantch*, 27 November 1999.
- ⁷ *Zartonk*, 62nd year, 16 November 1999.
- ⁸ *Aztag*, 72nd year, 20 November 1999, № 216(20379).
- ⁹ *Gantch*, 27 November 1999.
- ¹⁰ *Aztag*, 72nd year, 1 December 1999, № 224 (20387); *Ararad*, 62nd year, 1 December 1999; *Zartonk*, 62nd year, 1 December 1999.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.* Interestingly *Zartonk* left out the part that André Tabourian was a member of the Central Civil Council of the See of Cilicia, and *Ararad* left out the part that he is the President of Interbrand. While *Aztag* mentioned that in 1964 and 1968 he had been elected an MP as a Tashnag Party candidate.
- ¹² *Aztag*, 72nd year, 1 December 1999, № 224(20387).
- ¹³ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁴ *Aztag*, 72nd year, 2 December 1999, № 225(20388).
- ¹⁵ *Zartonk*, 62nd year, 3 December 1999.
- ¹⁶ *Ararad*, 62nd year, 7 December 1999, № 2(16388).
- ¹⁷ *Gantch*, 4 December 1999, p. 8.
- ¹⁸ *Aztag*, 72nd year 7 December 1999, № 229(20392).
- ¹⁹ *Aztag*, 72nd year, 8 December 1999, № 2305(20393).
- ²⁰ *Zartonk*, 62nd year, 14 December 1999.
- ²¹ *Aztag*, 72nd year, 10 December 1999, № 232(20395).
- ²² *Ararad* 63rd year, 7 December 1999, № 2(16888).
- ²³ *Zartonk*, 62nd year, 10 December 1999.
- ²⁴ *Aztag*, 72nd year, 23 December 1999.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*
- ²⁶ *The Daily Star*, Beirut, 24 December 1999, № 10070.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*
- ³¹ *Zartonk*, 63rd year, 20 February 2000, № 39(17738) and 30 January 2000.
- ³² *Aztag*, 72nd year, 3 February 2000, № 275(20438).
- ³³ *Zartonk*, 63rd year, 20 January 2000.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*
- ³⁵ *Zartonk*, 63rd year, 27 February 2000, № 45(17744).
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, 63rd year, 18 March 2000, № 59(17758).
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, 63rd year, 19 March 2000, № 60(17759).
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, 63rd year, 18 March 2000, № 59(17758).
- ³⁹ *Ararad*, 63rd year, 18 March 2000.
- ⁴⁰ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 6 April 2000.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 73rd year, 10 June 2000, № 75(20538).

- ⁴² *Zartonk*, 63rd year, 24 February 2000.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 63rd year, 25 March 2000.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 63rd year, 29 March 2000.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 63rd year, 12 May 2000, № 101(17800). The same news was given also in *Aztag* of 12 May 2000 at the bottom of page one, in *Ararad* of 12 May 2000, in the middle of page one, while in *Zartonk* it was at the top.
- ⁴⁷ *Zartonk*, 63rd year, 8 June 2000, № 124(17823).
- ⁴⁸ *Zartonk*, 63rd year, 11 June 2000, № 127(17825); *Aztag*, 73rd year, 9 June 2000, № 74 (20537).
- ⁴⁹ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 21 June 2000, № 84(20547).
- ⁵⁰ *Zartonk*, 63rd year, 23 June 2000, № 137(17836).
- ⁵¹ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 11 July 2000, № 10(20564); *Zartonk*, 63rd year, 12 July 2000, № 152(17851).
- ⁵² *Aztag*, 73rd year, 12 July 2000, № 102(20565).
- ⁵³ *Ararad*, 63rd year, 13 July 2000, № 175(17061).
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁵ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 11 July 2000, № 103(20566).
- ⁵⁶ *Zartonk*, 63rd year, 14 July 2000, № 154(17853) and 15 July 2000 № 155(17854).
- ⁵⁷ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 13 July 2000, № 103(20566).
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 73rd year, 21 July 2000, № 110(20573).
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 73rd year, 29 July 2000, № 117(20580).
- ⁶⁰ There was some confusion in the Armenian newspapers about his name. At first it was given as colonel Jean Hovassapian, in some newspaper reports and later on, apparently to avoid vote cancellations, his name was cited as it was in his identity card, Oghassabian (or Oghassapian as some Armenian papers wrote).
- ⁶¹ *Zartonk*, 63rd year, 1 June 2000, № 118(17817).
- ⁶² *Zartonk*, 63rd year, 9 June 2000, № 125(17824).
- ⁶³ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 17 July 2000, № 106(20569).
- ⁶⁴ *Zartonk*, 63rd year, 18 July 2000, № 157(17825).
- ⁶⁵ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 15 July 2000, № 105(20568).
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 73rd year, 18 July 2000, № 107(20570).
- ⁶⁷ *Zartonk*, 63rd year, 4 August 2000, № 172(17871).
- ⁶⁸ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 18 June 2000, № 107(20570).
- ⁶⁹ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 15 July 2000, № 105(20568).
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁷¹ *Zartonk*, 63rd year, 16 July 2000, № 1567(17855).
- ⁷² *Ibid.*
- ⁷³ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 11 July 2000, № 1057(20569).
- ⁷⁴ *Ibid.*; *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 29 July 2000, No 9933.
- ⁷⁵ Sabine Darrous, "Hentchag as Split as ever," *The Daily Star*, 3 August 2000, № 10252, p. 2.
- ⁷⁶ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 15 July 2000, № 105(20568).
- ⁷⁷ *Ararad*, 63rd year, 21 July 2000, № 182(17068); *Aztag*, 73rd year, 21 June 2000, № 110(20573).
- ⁷⁸ *Ararad*, 63rd year, 7 August 2000, № 185(17071).
- ⁷⁹ *Ararad*, 63rd year, 1 August 2000, № 180(17066).
- ⁸⁰ *Gantch*, 29 July 2000, № 426(282).
- ⁸¹ *Gantch*, 5 August 2000, № 427(283).

- ⁸² *Aztag*, 73rd year, 7 August 2000, № 124(20587).
- ⁸³ *Gantch*, 29 July 2000, № 426(282), p. 6.
- ⁸⁴ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 24 July 2000, № 112(20575).
- ⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 73rd year, 25 July 2000, № 113(20576).
- ⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 73rd year, 26 July 2000, № 114(20577).
- ⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 73rd year, 1 August 2000, № 119(20582).
- ⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 73rd year, 2 August 2000, № 120(20583).
- ⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 73rd year, 29 July 2000, № 117(20580).
- ⁹⁰ *The Daily Star*, 16 August 2000.
- ⁹¹ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 5 August 2000, № 123(20586).
- ⁹² *Ibid*.
- ⁹³ *Ibid*, 73rd year, 31 July 2000, № 123 (20587), and 5 August 2000 № 123(20586).
- ⁹⁴ *Zartontk*, 63rd year, 10 June 2000, № 126(17825).
- ⁹⁵ *Gantch*, 8 July 2000, № 423(279).
- ⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 22 July 2000, № 425(281).
- ⁹⁷ *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 29 July 2000, № 9933.
- ⁹⁸ Dr. Yeghia Djeredjian informed the present writer that he had advised Nassib Lahoud against taking Yerevanian on his list, as he might withdraw after candidacies were no longer accepted by the Ministry of Interior, leaving Dr. Hovnanian as the sole candidate. Upon Yerevanian's death *Zartontk* (21 December 2000) praised him for refusing to be a "false unity" candidate in the elections of 2000.
- ⁹⁹ *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 29 July 2000, № 9933.
- ¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 24 July 2000, № 9928.
- ¹⁰¹ *L'Orient Le-Jour* named Najarian, as Nizar, while *Aztag* gave his name as Nazar. Apparently in non-Armenian circles he was known as Nizar, probably based on his identity card.
- ¹⁰² *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 24 July 2000, № 9928; *Ibid*, 27 July 2000, № 9931.
- ¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 31 July 2000, № 9934.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 3 August 2000, № 9937.
- ¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*.
- ¹⁰⁶ *Zartontk*, 63rd year, 1 August 2000, № 169(17868).
- ¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*.
- ¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*.
- ¹⁰⁹ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 31 July 2000, № 118(20581).
- ¹¹⁰ *Ibid*.
- ¹¹¹ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 10 August 2000, as translated from Simon Abou Fadel's article in *Diar* of 9 August 2000, also given in *Ararad*, in a different version (12 August 2000).
- ¹¹² *Zartontk*, 63rd year, 4 August 2000, № 172(17871).
- ¹¹³ Sabin Darrous, "Hentchag as Split as Ever", *The Daily Star*, 3 August 2000, № 10252, p. 2.
- ¹¹⁴ *Zartontk*, 63rd year, 4 August 2000, № 172(17871).
- ¹¹⁵ *Ararad*, 63rd year, 5 August 2000, № 184(17070).
- ¹¹⁶ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 7 August 2000, № 124(20587); *Ararad*, 63d year, 7 August 2000, № 185(17071).
- ¹¹⁷ The present writer was informed, during the summer of 2000, that Dr. Vazken Jamgotchian and Sevag Panossian had resigned from the Ramgavar Azadagan District Committee as they had opposed Kassardjian's candidacy. Among the dissident Ramgavars was a wealthy businessman, Nar Khatchadourian, who led the opposition to

Kassardjian. With him was Hovsep Emirian, the former chairman of the District Committee.

¹¹⁸ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 7 August 2000, № 124(20587); *Ararad*, 63rd year, 7 August 2000, № 185(17071).

¹¹⁹ *Zartongk*, 63rd year, 8 August 2000, № 175(17824).

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, 63rd year, 6 August 2000, № 174(17873) p. 3.

¹²¹ During the electoral campaign of 2000, many people assumed, rightly or wrongly, that Joukhadarian was penalized by the Tashnag Party, for he had not stopped the Armenian Catholic Mesrobian School, in the center of Bourdj Hammoud, from inviting Hariri, to preside over their commencement on 9 July 2000. Tickets were distributed with Hariri's name on them and public announcements were published. It was rumoured that the Tashnag Party had asked the Director, to cancel the invitation or postpone it. Upon the latter's refusal, they had allegedly contacted the patriarch, Nerses Bedros XIX, who had ordered the postponement of the commencement, which was postponed to 4 September. However, Hariri refused to attend the commencement which was conducted but not under his auspices. MP Joukhadarian did not attend the Armenian Bloc meeting held after the elections but before the newly elected parliament met. His name was not mentioned among those present in the Bloc's meeting (*Aztag*, 23 September 2000) and *Zartongk* (28 September 2000) referred to this.

¹²² Sabine Darrous, "Joukhadarian Bows Out of the Race" *The Daily Star*, 8 August 2000.

¹²³ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 9 August 2000, № 126(20589).

¹²⁴ Sabine Darrous, *op.cit.* the *Daily Star*, 8 August 2000.

¹²⁵ Sabine Darrous, 8 August 2000, № 125(20588).

¹²⁶ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 8 August 2000, № 125 (20588).

¹²⁷ *The Daily Star*, 8 August 2000, *Aztag* 73rd year, 9 August 2000, № 126(20589); *Ararad*, 63rd year, 10 August 2000, № 188(17074); *Zartongk*, 63rd year, 5 August 2000.

¹²⁸ Sabine Darrous, "Makhzoumi Presents his" Sons of Beirut List", *The Daily Star*, 11 August 2000; *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 11 August 2000, № 9944; *Ararad*, 63rd year, 11 August 2000, № 189(17075).

¹²⁹ *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 10 August 2000, № 9943.

¹³⁰ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 9 August 2000, № 126(20589).

¹³¹ *Ibid*, 73rd year, 12 August 2000, № 129(20592).

¹³² *Ibid*, 73rd year, 19 August 2000, № 135(20598).

¹³³ *Ibid*.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, 73rd year, 22 August 2000, № 137(20600).

¹³⁵ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 31 July 2000, № 118(20581); *The Daily Star*, 7 August 2000.

¹³⁶ Nafez Kawas, "Salam Lashes Hariri's Heavy Spending", *The Daily Star*, 8 August 2000.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*.

¹³⁸ *Ararad*, 63rd year, 12 August 2000, № 190(17076).

¹³⁹ *The Daily Star*, 16 August 2000.

¹⁴⁰ *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 11 August 2000, № 9944.

¹⁴¹ *Ararad*, 12 August 2000, № 190(17076).

¹⁴² *Zartongk*, 63rd year, 12 August 2000, № 179(17878).

¹⁴³ *Ibid*, 63rd year, 10 August 2000, № 177(17876).

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 63rd year, 12 August 2000, № 179(17878).

¹⁴⁵ *Ararad*, 63rd year, 13 August 2000, № 191(17077).

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 63rd year, 17 August 2000, № 194(17080).

- ¹⁴⁸ Mona Ziade, "Heavyweights Line up with MP Lahoud", *The Daily Star*, 14 August 2000.
- ¹⁴⁹ When Nassib Lahoud's list was published in *Aztag* (14 August 2000, № 13(20593) Raffy Madeyan's name was given as Raffy Haoui, the surname of his stepfather Georges Haoui, former chief of the Communist Party. This was repeated on a few other occasions, apparently to create the impression that he was part-Armenian or to attract attention to his link with the Communist leader.
- ¹⁵⁰ *The Daily Star*, 14 August 2000.
- ¹⁵¹ *Gantch*, 19 August 2000 № 429(285) translation of the article of Ahmed Zein, "The story of a picture" from *Safir*.
- ¹⁵² *The Daily Star*, 14 August 2000.
- ¹⁵³ Ibid.
- ¹⁵⁴ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 16 August 2000, № 132(20595).
- ¹⁵⁵ *The Daily Star*, 21 August 2000.
- ¹⁵⁶ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 12 August 2000, № 129(20592).
- ¹⁵⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁵⁸ *Ararad*, 63rd year, 16 August 2000, № 193(17079); *Aztag*, 73rd year, 15 August 2000, № 131(20594).
- ¹⁵⁹ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 16 August 2000, № 132 (20595); *Ararad*, 63rd year, 17 August 2000, № 194(17080).
- ¹⁶⁰ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 17 August 2000, № 133(20596); *Ararad*, 63rd year, 18 August 2000, № 195(17081).
- ¹⁶¹ Ibid.
- ¹⁶² Ibid, 73rd year, 18 August 2000, № 134(20597).
- ¹⁶³ Ibid, 73rd year, 19 August 2000, № 135(20598); *Ararad* 63rd year, 20 August 2000, № 197 (17083).
- ¹⁶⁴ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 22 August 2000, № 137(20600).
- ¹⁶⁵ Ibid, 73rd year, 24 August 2000, № 139(20602).
- ¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 73rd year, 24 August 2000, № 139(20602); *Ararad*, 63rd year, 26 August 2000, № 202(17088).
- ¹⁶⁷ *Ararad*, 63rd year, 27 August 2000, № 203(17089).
- ¹⁶⁸ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 21 August 2000, № 136(20599); *Ararad*, 63rd year, 22 August 2000, № 198(17084).
- ¹⁶⁹ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 29 August 2000, № 143(20606).
- ¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 73rd year, 30 August 2000, № 144(20607). In the Huntchag daily *Ararad* 5 September 2000, № 214(17100) Avedis Razmig, after the elections, condemned the waste of money used to organize a dinner for 5000 people and wrote that with the money spent there, teachers and schools could have been kept and Armenian unity and the younger generations would have been served better. A year later an intellectual, Ara Ardzrouni praised Catholicos Aram I for his evenhandedness and criticized the spiritual leaders of the Armenian denominations, and priests from Bourdj Hammoud and Khalil Badawi-Hadjen for attending electoral meetings or taking sides. He also criticized Ambassador Navasartian for participating in one sided electoral events (*Ardziv*, Beirut, 8th year, 6 December 2001, № 19-20(187-88).
- ¹⁷¹ Ibid, 73rd year, 18 August 2000, № 134(20597); *Ararad*, 63rd year, 18 August 2000, № 195(17081).
- ¹⁷² *Ararad*, 63rd year, 17 August 2000, № 194(17080); *Aztag*, 73rd year, 16 August 2000, № 132(20595).
- ¹⁷³ *Ararad*, 63rd year, 18 August 2000, № 195(17081).

- ¹⁷⁴ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 24 August 2000, № 139(20602).
- ¹⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 73rd year, 29 August 2000, № 143(20606).
- ¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*.
- ¹⁷⁷ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 24 August 2000, № 134(20597) and 18 August № 134(20602).
- ¹⁷⁸ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 25 August 2000, № 140(20603).
- ¹⁷⁹ *Ararad*, 63rd year, 27 August 2000, № 203(17089).
- ¹⁸⁰ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 29 August 2000, № 143(20606).
- ¹⁸¹ *Ibid*.
- ¹⁸² *Aztag*, 73rd year, 24 August 2000, № 139(20602); *Ararad*, 63rd year, 24 August 2000, № 200(17086).
- ¹⁸³ *Zartontk*, 63rd year, 10 August 2000, № 177(17876).
- ¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*.
- ¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*.
- ¹⁸⁶ *Gantch*, 19 August 2000, № 429(285); *Zartontk*, 63rd year, 18 August 2000, № 184(17883).
- ¹⁸⁷ *Zartontk*, 63rd year, 19 August 2000, № 184 (17883).
- ¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*.
- ¹⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 63rd year, 23 August 2000, № 188(17887).
- ¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 63rd year, 25 August 2000, № 190(17889).
- ¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, 63rd year, 12 August 2000, № 179(17878).
- ¹⁹² *Ibid*, 63rd year, 19 August 2000, № 185(17884); *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 19 August 2000, № 9951.
- ¹⁹³ *Zartontk*, 63rd year, 20 August 2000, № 186(17878).
- ¹⁹⁴ *Ibid*.
- ¹⁹⁵ *Ibid*.; *The Daily Star*, 19 August 2000, № 10266.
- ¹⁹⁶ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 21 August 2000, № 136 (20599).
- ¹⁹⁷ *Ararad*, 63rd year, 22 August 2000, № 198(17084).
- ¹⁹⁸ *Zartontk*, 63rd year, 20 August 2000, № 186(17885).
- ¹⁹⁹ *Ararad*, 63rd year, 22 August 2000, № 198(17084).
- ²⁰⁰ *Nayiri*, 8 August 2000, № 130.
- ²⁰¹ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 13 August 2000, № 129(20592).
- ²⁰² *Ibid*, 73rd year, 16 August 2000, № 132(20595).
- ²⁰³ *Zartontk*, 63rd year, 23 August 2000, № 188(17887).
- ²⁰⁴ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 24 August 2000, № 139(20602).
- ²⁰⁵ *The Daily Star*, 18 August 2000, № 10265.
- ²⁰⁶ Marlin Dick, "Madeyan Shakes up Armenians," *The Daily Star*, 23 August 2000, № 10269.
- ²⁰⁷ *Ibid*.
- ²⁰⁸ *Ibid*.
- ²⁰⁹ Marlin Dick "Murr Takes Low Road with Dwarf Jibe Against Armenian Candidate," *The Daily Star*, 24 August 2000, № 10270.
- ²¹⁰ Maha Al Azar, "MP Lahoud Rallies Metn Against Murrs", *The Daily Star*, 25 August 2000.
- ²¹¹ *Gantch*, 25 August 2000, № 430(286).
- ²¹² Mona Ziade, "Metn Clash of Convictions" *The Daily Star*, 26 August 2000, p. 3.
- ²¹³ *Ibid*.
- ²¹⁴ *Ibid*.
- ²¹⁵ Tilda Abou Rizk "Dans le Metn Bataille Politique et Tactique Electorale"; *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 26 August 2000, № 9957, p. 4.

- ²¹⁶ *The Daily Star*, 23 August 2000, № 10269.
- ²¹⁷ According to persistent rumours, Varoujan Manoukian had told the Tashnag Party not to use the Armenian Yeghishe Manoukian College at Dbaye as an electoral center. The rumours had it that on election day he had come to the school and had seen his demand had been ignored; the school, whose benefactors were the Manoukian family, was being used as an electoral center. He started to take photographs when two or three party members pushed him into a room locking him up, after confiscating his camera. Later party chiefs heard of the incident and ordered his release with apologies. However it was assumed by some that this incident led his brother, the well known benefactor Vatche Manoukian to sever his links with the party and affiliate organizations.
- ²¹⁸ Al Wikala al-Wataniya Lil Aelem, "Nataij Rassmiya Li Intikhabat Jabal Lubnan Wa Lubnan el Shimali, 31 August 2000.
- ²¹⁹ *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 28 August 2000, № 9958.
- ²²⁰ Ibid.
- ²²¹ Ibid.
- ²²² Mona Ziade, "Political Battle 'Par Excellence' in Metn. Rhetoric Fuels Violence in Bourj Hammoud," *The Daily Star*, 23 August 2000, № 10269.
- ²²³ *The Daily Star*, 28 August 2000,
- ²²⁴ *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 28 August 2000, № 9958.
- ²²⁵ *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 29 August 2000, № 9959.
- ²²⁶ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 29 August 2000, № 143(20606).
- ²²⁷ *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 29 August 2000, № 9959.
- ²²⁸ *The Daily Star*, 31 August 2000.
- ²²⁹ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 28 August 2000, № 142(20605).
- ²³⁰ Ibid., 73rd year, 29 August 2000, № 143(20606).
- ²³¹ *Ararad*, 63rd year, 29 August 2000, № 204(17090).
- ²³² Ibid., 63rd year, 30 August 2000, № 205(17091).
- ²³³ *Gantch*, 27 September 2000, № 431(287) as translated from *Safir*, 29 August 2000.
- ²³⁴ *Zartonk*, 63rd year, 31 August 2000, № 194(17893).
- ²³⁵ *Gantch*, 9 September 2000 № 432; *Ardziv*, 8th year, 6 December 2001, № 19-20(187-188), insulting words used included "reptile, snake, sultan of money."
- ²³⁶ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 31 August 2000, № 145(20608).
- ²³⁷ *Zartonk*, 63rd year, 1 September 2000, № 196(17895).
- ²³⁸ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 28 August 2000, № 142(20605); *Ararad*, 63rd year, 1 September 2000, № 207(17093).
- ²³⁹ *Zartonk*, 63rd year, 2 September 2000, № 195(17894).
- ²⁴⁰ Ibid., 63rd year, 1 September 2000, № 196(17895).
- ²⁴¹ Ibid., 63rd year, 2 September 2000, № 197(17896).
- ²⁴² *Gantch*, 2 September 2000, № 431(287).
- ²⁴³ Ibid.
- ²⁴⁴ *Ararad*, 63rd year, 3 September 2000, № 209(17095).
- ²⁴⁵ Ibid., 63rd year, 20 August 2000, № 197(17083).
- ²⁴⁶ *Diar*, *Safir*, *Mustaqbal*, *Nahar* and *Bayrak*, 22 August 2000, as quoted by *Spurk* periodical, Beirut, July-September 2000, № 7-9, p. 15.
- ²⁴⁷ Al Wikala al-Wataniya Lil Aelem, "Nataij Rassmiya Li Intikhabat Beirut Wal Junub Wal Biqaa, 5 September 2000.
- ²⁴⁸ *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 4 September 2000, № 9964.
- ²⁴⁹ *The Daily Star*, 4 September 2000, № 10279.
- ²⁵⁰ *Zartonk*, 63rd year, 5 September 2000, № 1995(178984).

- ²⁵¹ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 4 September 2000, № 148(20611).
- ²⁵² *Ararad*, 63rd year, 5 September 2000, № 210(17096).
- ²⁵³ *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 2 September 2000, № 9963.
- ²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 4 September 2000, № 9964.
- ²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 28-29 May 2005, № 11376.
- ²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*
- ²⁵⁷ *Gantch*, 30 September 2000, № 435(291), p. 4.
- ²⁵⁸ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 6 September 2000, № 150(20613), gave different figures. In Beirut I 3046 Armenians had voted for the Armenian Unity Front and 253 for Hariri. In Beirut II 1574 Armenians had voted for the Front and 422 for Hariri's list, and in Beirut III 6366 Armenians had voted for the Front and 1405 for Hariri's list. Thus a total of 10986 had voted for the Front (84%) and 2080 for Hariri's lists (16%). *Ararad*, 63rd year, 7 September 2000 gave the same numbers as *Aztag*.
- ²⁵⁹ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 4 September 2000, № 148(20611).
- ²⁶⁰ Michel Touma, in a post-elections analysis in *L'Orient-Le Jour* (8 September 2000, № 9968) indicated that in the Christian areas of Beirut I, 7107 persons had voted for Dedeyan, out of about 15500 voters. Dedeyan, received more votes than Fleihan, who received most of the Sunni votes. Dedeyan continued his activities in the Armenian Bloc after his defeat and on 2 October visited PM Hoss and complained about the «confessional and sectarian atmosphere prevalent in the country not favorable to anyone».
- ²⁶¹ Marlin Dick, «The Armenian Party Machines Swing into Action again,” *The Daily Star*, 4 September 2000, No 10279.
- ²⁶² *Zartontk*, 63rd year, 6 September 2000, № 200(17899).
- ²⁶³ *Ibid.*
- ²⁶⁴ *Ararad*, 63rd year, 10 September 2000, № 215(17101).
- ²⁶⁵ *Zartontk*, 63rd year, 10 September 2000, № 204(17903).
- ²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 63rd year, 14 September 2000, № 207(17906).
- ²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 63rd year, 7 September 2000, indicated that Mr. and Mrs. Haygaz Yardemian, who had supported the Armenian Unity Front, donated 100.000LL to *Zartontk*, congratulating their brother in law and brother Hagop Kassardjian.
- ²⁶⁸ *Zartontk*, 63rd year, 8 September 2000, № 202(17901).
- ²⁶⁹ *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 5 September 2000, № 9965.
- ²⁷⁰ Al Wikala al Wataniya Lil Aelem, «Nataij Rassmiya Li Intikhabat Beirut Wal Janub Wal Biqaa, 5 September 2000.
- ²⁷¹ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 9 September 2000, № 153(20616); *Ararad*, 63rd year, 10 September 2000, № 215(17101); *Zartontk*, 63rd year 10 September 2000, № 204(17903).
- ²⁷² *Aztag*, 73rd year, 12 September 2000, № 155(20618).
- ²⁷³ *Zartontk*, 63rd year, 14 September 2000, № 207(17906).
- ²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*
- ²⁷⁵ *Ararad*, 63rd year, 14 September 2000, № 218(17104).
- ²⁷⁶ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 15 September 2000, № 158(20621).
- ²⁷⁷ *Gantch*, 16 September 2000, № 433(289).
- ²⁷⁸ *Ararad*, 63rd year, 17 September 2000, № 221(17107).
- ²⁷⁹ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 27 October 2000, № 194(20657).
- ²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*
- ²⁸¹ *Ararad*, 63rd year, 28 October 2000, № 256(17142).
- ²⁸² *Ibid.*
- ²⁸³ *Ararad*, 63rd year, 28 October 2000, № 256(17142).

- ²⁸⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁸⁵ *Zartonk*, 63rd year 28 October 2000.
- ²⁸⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁸⁷ *Ararad*, 63rd year, 28 October 2000, № 256(17142).
- ²⁸⁸ *Zartonk*, 63rd year 8 November 2000.
- ²⁸⁹ *The Daily Star*, 7 November 2000, № 10334.
- ²⁹⁰ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 5 December 2000, № 226(20689).
- ²⁹¹ *Zartonk*, 63rd year 7 December 2000.
- ²⁹² *Aztag*, 73rd year, 23 December 2000, № 242(20705).
- ²⁹³ *Aztag*, 74th year, 2 February 2001, № 270(20732).
- Dr. Hovnanian said the second Armenian minister would be appointed soon (*L'Orient-Le Jour*, 10 February 2001, № 10094). There was persistent talk at the beginning of February 2001, that the industrialist Garbis Markarian, vice-president of the AGBU District Council of Lebanon, would be appointed as the second minister, but this did not materialize.
- ²⁹⁴ *Zartonk*, 64th year, 1 June 2001, № 118(18108).
- ²⁹⁵ Ibid., 63rd year, 20 November 2000.
- ²⁹⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁹⁷ Ibid., 63rd year, 22 November 2000.
- ²⁹⁸ *Aztag*, 73rd year, 7 February 2001, № 274(20736).
- ²⁹⁹ *Zartonk*, 63rd year, 16 November 2000, as translated from *Safir*, 15 November 2000.
- ³⁰⁰ *Aztag*, 74th year, 19 April 2001; *Ararad*, 64th year, 19 April 2001; *Zartonk*, 64th year 19 April 2001.
- ³⁰¹ *Aztag*, 75th year, 20 May 2002.
- ³⁰² *Zartonk*, 65th year, 29 May 2002, № 113(18397).
- ³⁰³ Ibid., 65th year, 28 May 2002, № 112(18396).
- ³⁰⁴ *Gantch*, 25 May 2002, No 520 (376).
- ³⁰⁵ Ibid.
- ³⁰⁶ *Zartonk*, 65th year, 2 June 2002, № 117(18401).
- ³⁰⁷ *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 3 June 2002, № 10481.
- ³⁰⁸ Ibid.
- ³⁰⁹ Ibid.
- ³¹⁰ *Nahar*, Beirut, 5 June 2002, p. 5.

ՀԱՅՈՑ ՄԱՄՆԱԿՑՈՒԹԻՒՆԸ
ԷՄԻԼ ԼԱՀՈՒՏԻ (1998-2007) ՆԱԽԱԳԱՀՈՒԹԵԱՆ ԺԱՄԱՆԱԿԱՇՐՋԱՆԻ
ԼԻԲԱՆԱՆԻ ԽՈՐՀՐԴԱՐԱՆԱԿԱՆ ԸՆՏՐՈՒԹԻՒՆՆԵՐՈՒՆ (Ա.)
(ԱՄՓՈՓՈՒՄ)

ԶԱԽՆ ՄՍԸՐԼԵԱՆ

Հեղինակը հիմնուելով ժամանակակից լիբանանահայ, առաւել՝ Լիբանանի մէջ լույս տեսնող մի քանի ֆրանսատառ եւ անգլիատառ թերթերու, հայկական թերթերու մէջ թարգմանաբար տրուած տեղեկութիւններու, ինչպէս նաեւ անձնական հաղորդակցութեամբ կուտակուած տեղեկութիւններու վրայ, հանգամանօրէն կը ներկայացնէ Լիբանանի 2000 թուականի խորհրդարանական ընտրութիւններուն հայկական մասնակցութիւնը Պէյրութի, Հիւսիսային Մեթնի եւ Զահլէի ընտրաշրջաններուն մէջ:

1996ին, այս կամ այն ձեւով հնարաւոր եղած էր որ ազգային երեք կուսակցութիւնները մասնակցին ընտրութեանց միասնական թեկնածուներով Պէյրութի մէջ, վարչապետ Հարիրիի ցանկին վրայ: 2000ին այդ հնարաւոր չեղաւ: Հարիրի ընդդիմադիր էր: **ՌԱԿԸ** եւ **ՍԴՀԿ**ի երեսփոխանին կողմնակիցներն ու անկուսակցականներ մտան Հարիրիի ցանկին մէջ, իսկ **ՀՅ Դաշնակցութեան** կուսակցականներով եւ անկուսակցականներով կազմած «Միասնականութեան Յանկ»ը միացաւ վարչապետ Սելիմ Հոսսին, որուն մասնակից էր նաեւ **ՍԴՀԿ** կեդրոնական Վարչութիւնը: Հարիրի եւ իր հայ ցանկակիցները՝ Յակոբ Գասարճեան, Սերժ Թուրսարգիսեան, Եղիա Ճէրէճեան եւ Ժան Օղասափեան յաջողեցան Պէյրութի մէջ: Միշէլ Մըրի ցանկին վրայ **ՀՅ Դաշնակցութեան** սեփական թեկնածուն՝ Սեպուհ Յովնանեան, յաջողեցաւ Հիւսիսային Մեթնի մէջ, իսկ Իլիաս Սքաֆի ցանկին վրայ **ՀՅԴ**ի որդեգրած թեկնածուն՝ Ճորճ Գասարճի, յաջողեցաւ Զահլէի մէջ:

Լիբանանահայ գաղութիւն մէջ առժամեայ լարուածութիւն մը տիրելէ ետք ազգային երեք կուսակցութիւնները զանազան առիթներով իրարու հետ կապեր պահեցին եւ Ապրիլ 24ի յատուկ միասնական ձեռնարկներ ալ կազմակերպեցին:

