LEBANON

Map and population

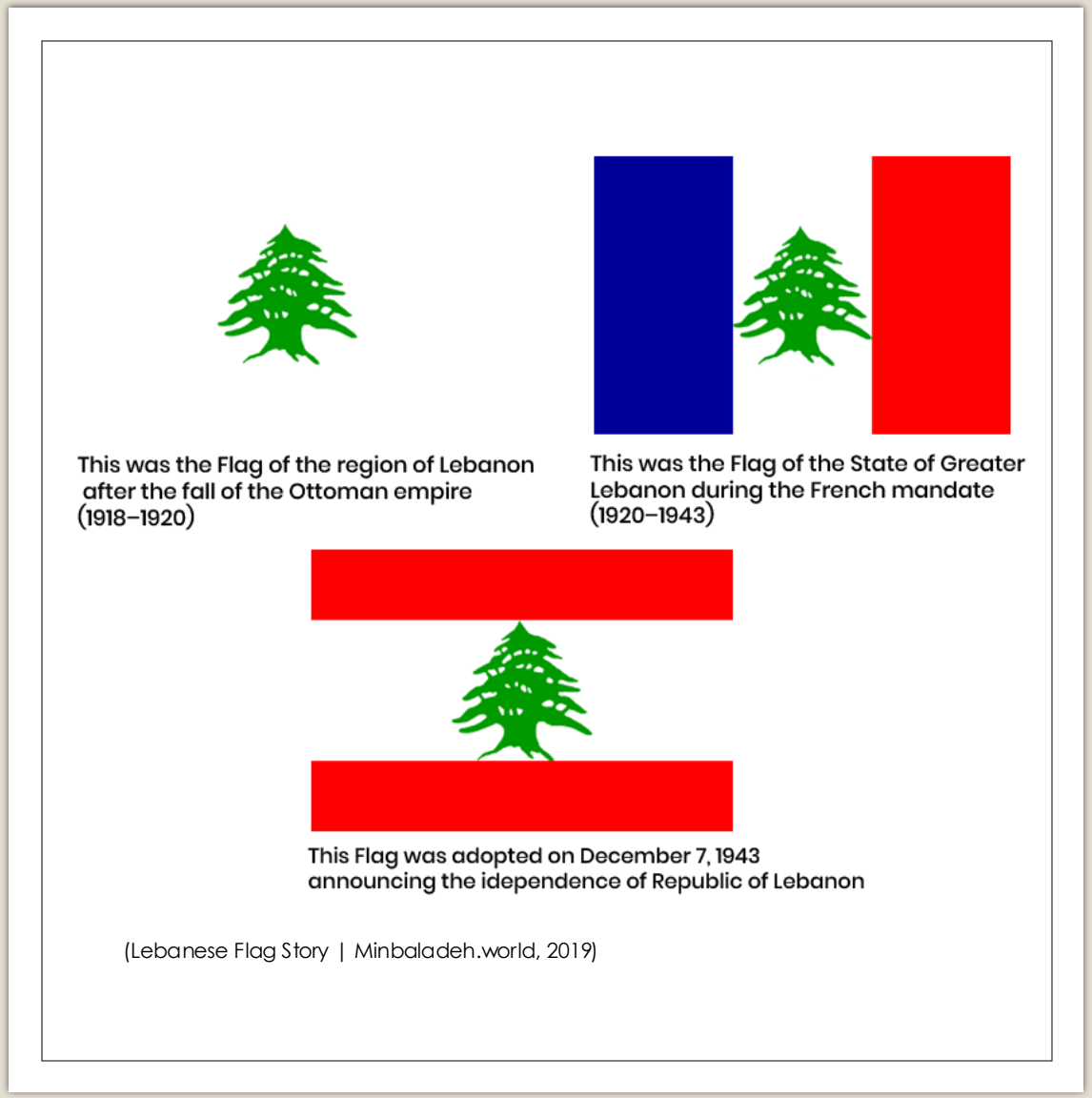
- Lebanon is divided into 8 governorates (WorldAtlas, 2021):
  - Akkar
  - North Lebanon
  - Baalbek-Hermel
  - Mount Lebanon
  - Beirut
  - Beqaa
  - Nabatieh
  - South Lebanon
- The capital of Lebanon is Beirut.
- The population is 5,773,493 (Lebanon Data | World Health Organization, 2023).
- The religious make-up of Lebanon is:
- Muslim 61.1% (30.6% Sunni, 30.5% Shia, smaller percentages of Alawites and Ismailis)
- Christian 33.7% (Maronite Catholics are the largest Christian group)
- Druze 5.2%
- There are small numbers of Jews, Baha'is, Buddhists, and Hindus (Lebanon Demographics Profile 2019, 2019).



(WorldAtlas, 2021)

Language

- Lebanon is, unofficially, considered a trilingual country. Article 11 of the 2004 Lebanese constitution states that "The Arabic language is the official national language. The conditions under which the French language is to be used are determined by law". English is also commonly spoken but has no official status or recognition.
- Arabic has been the language of the region since the Muslim conquests in the 7th century and French came to Lebanon with the arrival of Frankish Crusaders in the 11th-13th Century. The Maronite Christians (a Roman Catholic denomination) who lived on Mount Lebanon had a strong religious connection with the Catholic Frankish Crusaders and saw them as their 'saviours' as opposed to invaders. The Muslims eventually expelled the Crusaders, but the French built a good relationship with the Maronites, which remains to this day.
- In the 19th Century, Christian missionaries from France, USA, and UK arrived in Lebanon and the Lebanese Maronite Christians took an interest in English and French. The missionaries began to set up schools, taught in English or French, and many members of the middle- and upper-class of Lebanese society (regardless of faith) sent their children to these schools. Christian and Muslim leaders realised the importance of language for the fostering of culture, so they encouraged the mission schools and Muslim schools to teach in all three languages, so that all students would have access to the language and culture of all their family and peers, regardless of religious background.
- (King, 2023)



(Lebanese Flag Story | Minbaladeh.world, 2019)

Independence

- Lebanon was under the rule of the Ottoman Empire from the 16th Century until the Ottoman Empire fell in World War I. The Sykes-Picot agreement and the 1919 Paris Peace Conference led to Lebanon coming under the administration of the French Mandate in 1920.
- In 1926, the Lebanese constitution was drawn up, outlining the new structure of their government which stressed the importance of religious and cultural diversity. Lebanon thus began to fight for independence from France.
- In 1941, during World War II, Britain invaded Lebanon to protect it from German invasion, and the land was kept in the hands of the Allies. After this battle, Charles de Gaulle visited the country, and once again Lebanon asked for independence.
- France resists this until 1943, when several countries recognise the independence of Lebanon, and France eventually concedes to the demands of the Lebanese people. Lebanon gained independence on 22nd November 1943.
- (Blair, 2024)

Political landscape

- The government of Lebanon is structured in such a way to ensure equal representation of the 3 major faith groups – Maronite Christian, Sunni Islam, and Shi'a Islam. 50% of seats in Lebanese parliament are reserved for Muslim politicians, and the remaining 50% is reserved for Christian politicians.
- Since independence in 1943, Lebanon has had a customary (not constitutional) set of limitations for the senior political officials: the President should be a Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister should be a Sunni Muslim, and the Speaker should be a Shi'a Muslim.
- President – currently vacant. Due to Michel Aoun's tenure ending and there being no successor, this seat is vacant, and the powers of the president are distributed amongst the cabinet.
- Prime Minister – Najib Mikati (نجيب ميقاتي). Mikati is the leader of The Azm Movement (تيار العزم), a secular (though mainly Sunni in membership) and centrist party.
- Speaker – Nabih Berri (نبيه برّي). Berri is chairman of the Amal Movement (حركة أمل), a centre-right party with nationalist and populist ideals, with large focuses on anti-Zionism and unity between Christian and Muslim communities.
- Lebanon is a founding member of the Arab League.

News of Lebanon

- Israeli attacks on Lebanon rage on, with an estimated 10 children injured each day. However, Prime Minister Mikati has expressed that he is "cautiously hopeful" about reaching a ceasefire with Israel. A draft agreement has been drawn up by US officials, and a potential leak has been released by an Israeli media outlet. Mikati told a news broadcast that he expects a ceasefire in November. For the full article, see Al Jazeera, 31st October 2024. (Al Jazeera, 2024)
- Volunteers and relief workers have begun to clear out buildings such as sports halls, schools, and community buildings to create space for displaced people. For example, in Qob Elias, a group of volunteers transformed a technical college into a relief centre for the people of Baalbek (25miles away) to flee to from Israeli airstrikes. An estimated 1.2 million people have had to leave their homes in the last year. For the full article, see Sky News, 31st October 2024. (Sky, 2024)
- The United Nations continue to defend the place of the UNIFIL programme (United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon) in southern Lebanon and northern Israel. The Israeli military and government have repeatedly asked for the programme to be withdrawn, to which the UN have answered 'no' every time. This is because Israel insists that UNIFIL acts as a human shield for Hezbollah. For the full article, see BBC News, 15th October 2024. (Davies, 2024)

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