

**Refugee Review Tribunal  
AUSTRALIA**

**RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE**

**Research Response Number:** LBN23517  
**Country:** Lebanon  
**Date:** 1 February 2005

Keywords: Lebanon – Progressive Socialist Party – Walid Jumblatt – Talal Arslane faction – Political violence

This response was prepared by the Country Research Section of the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RRT within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

---

**Questions**

- 1. Please provide background details about the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) of Jumblatt.**
- 2. Please provide background details about the Arslane faction/party.**
- 3. Is there any evidence of conflict between these two groups and does this conflict result in regular armed confrontations/disputes?**
- 4. How do the Lebanese authorities deal with any disputes or confrontations described in question 3?**

**RESPONSE**

- 1. Please provide background details about the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) of Jumblatt.**

Founded in 1949 by Kamal Joumblatt, father of the current president of the party, the Progressive Socialist Party (At-Takadumi al-Ishteraki; Parti socialiste progressiste) presents itself as a progressive party advocating constitutional road to socialism and democracy. Its membership stands over 25,000 mainly drawn from Druze ('Historical Background' (undated), Progressive Socialist Party website [http://www.psp.org.lb/flash/EN/HistoryPSP\\_en.asp](http://www.psp.org.lb/flash/EN/HistoryPSP_en.asp) - Accessed 26 January 2005 – Attachment 1 ; *Europa World Year Book 2004*, 2004, Europa Publications, London p 2611 – Attachment 2).

A 2003 Rassemblement Canadien pour le Liban website elaborates further on the party. It states the party's mission, vision and foreign policy as follows:

**Mission**

- "Building the society on democratic bases where social security, equality, welfare, peace and freedom prevail and in which the human rights, as adopted by the U.N are protected."

## **Vision of Lebanon**

### **A. Political:**

1. Abolish political confessionalism and decentralize government, giving more power to municipalities
2. Encouraging democratic reforms, which would increase civil rights and liberties.
3. Abolishing all forms of discrimination.
4. Protect freedom of speech and publication as well as the right to form parties, associations, and syndicates
5. Abolish capital punishment
6. Separate the executive authority from the legislative authority

### **B. Political:**

1. Protect public property and especially the beaches
2. To protect the environment
3. To protect the Lebanese Arab identity and its civil Arab heritage.

### **C. Economic:**

1. To reform the Tax law and to adopt the principle of progressive taxation
2. To reexamine the priorities of general spending and give priority to the return of the displaced people program
3. To set up an economic, social comprehensive plan, which takes into consideration the countryside development, therefore achieving balance in development. This allows the State to carry out its social role with regards to the poorest categories of the society and provide them with housing, education and hospitalization

## **Foreign policy**

- Support of the Palestinian cause  
(Rassemblement Canadien pour le Liban (RCPL) 2003, *Analysis of the political landscape of Lebanon*), RCPL website <http://www.rcplonline.org/research-study/Political%20Parties.pdf> – Accessed 28 January 2005 – Attachment 3).

Under its umbrella, the PSP has several organizations: Progressive Youth Organization (PYO), Progressive Scout Organization (PSO), Progressive Women Union (PWU), Farah Social Foundation, Progressive Intellect Forum and Walidi Jumblat Foundation for University Studies (Progressive Youth Organization - PYO, (undated), Progressive Socialist Party website <http://www.psp.org.lb/flash/EN/PYO.asp> - accessed 26 January 2005 - Attachment 4). Some details of the PYO such as its objectives, activities and membership are also provided in the same site.

Michael Bellart gives an in-depth analysis of the Lebanese political scene plagued by religious and clannish sectarianism and how the PSP has gone through the metamorphosis to survive in the country. He comments that:

The PSP's original goals were to promote a more democratic system of government and combat the incidents of political parties being formed along religious lines. Druze

leader Kamal Jumblatt and group of leftist intellectuals founded the party in 1949. The party's founders were interested in social democratic change. They wanted to correct the fault on which Lebanon's government was built. However, they were unable to do so. With every political crisis, [the] PSP became more of an opposition force. It was a threat to the ruling class. And because the ruling class was composed of primarily one sect, the opposition force was destined to acquire a sectarian character as well.

In 1977, the party lost its founder and spokesman when Kamal Jumblatt was murdered. It was an important point for the PSP. The year not only marked the death of Kamal Jumblatt, but the selection of his son, Walid, as the party's new leader.

Examining the events from 1977 to the 2000 elections, one sees that the PSP has changed under the leadership of Walid Jumblatt. Though Jumblatt still preaches his father's values of secularism and democracy, he continues to lead the party away from its principles of democracy and secularism. Because of this, Lebanon's leading secular party changed into what it was created to fight—a vehicle of sectopolitics (Bellart, Michael 2000, 'The Fault Line' <http://www.scripps.ohiou.edu/news/beirut/bellart.html> - Accessed 27 January 2005 – Attachment 5).

A short biodata of the current leader of the party, Walid Jumblatt is given by Wikipedia as follows:

Walid Jumblatt (born August 7, 1949), is the current leader of the Progressive Socialist Party of Lebanon and the most prominent leader of the Druze community.

Walid Jumblatt is the son of Kamal Jumblatt, the founder of the party Walid Jumblatt now leads. Before his ascension to power following his father's assassination, he was considered to be a "playboy," wearing jeans and a leather jacket, riding a motorcycle and marrying a non-Druze, Jordanian woman.

He quickly proved however a true leader of his community, and became a major player in the Lebanese War. During the Israeli occupation of and subsequent withdrawal from Lebanon in 1982 and 1983, Jumblatt's militia, backed by Soviet-made weaponry from Syria, crushed the Christian militias that were threatening Druze villages, securing a Druze victory and solidifying his position as leader of the Druze.

During the ongoing Syrian occupation of Lebanon, Jumblatt has fought to maintain autonomy for the Lebanese people, often being outright critical of Syria, despite enjoying both political representation within the Syrian government and popularity within the Druze community ('Walid Jumblatt' 2004, Wikipedia website, 14 December [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walid\\_Jumblatt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walid_Jumblatt) - Accessed 28 January 2005 – Attachment 6).

## **2. Please provide background details about the Arslane faction/party.**

Talal Arslan representing one of the two leading Druze clans announced the formation of the Lebanese Democratic Party on 1 July 2001 ('The Lebanese Democratic Party' 2003, Prominentlebanese.com website, [http://www.prominentlebanese.com/political\\_parties/lebanese\\_democratic\\_party.asp](http://www.prominentlebanese.com/political_parties/lebanese_democratic_party.asp) -

Accessed 27 January 2005 – Attachment 7; ‘Arslan Announces the Creation of a New Political Party’ 2001, *IPR Strategic Information Database*, 3 July – Attachment 8; El-Khazen, Fardi (undated), ‘Lebanon’s Communal Elite-Mass Politics: the institutionalization of disintegration’ *lcps-lebanon.org* website <http://www.lcps-lebanon.org/pub/breview/br3/fkhazen3.html> - Accessed 27 January 2005 – Attachment 14). He introduced his new party as advocating openness to all other parties and factions of Lebanese society, refusing to be labelled as parties belonging to any particular sect or faction. Accordingly, the party has chosen the path of political moderation and openness, rejecting the logic of sectarianism and confessionalism. Arslan added that he rejected being a traditional leader who inherited his position from his father. The party is a means to break away from the narrow framework of his minority Druze community, and address all Lebanese people in all regions regardless of their religious affiliations (‘The Lebanese Democratic Party’ 2003, *Prominentlebanese.com* website, [http://www.prominentlebanese.com/political\\_parties/lebanese\\_democratic\\_party.asp](http://www.prominentlebanese.com/political_parties/lebanese_democratic_party.asp) - Accessed 27 January 2005 – Attachment 7).

The political agenda of the party are quoted as follows:

- 1- Sovereignty: Lebanon is a non-divisible, independent, sovereign state, which is final for all its citizens.
- 2- Arab State: Lebanon is an Arab State committed to the formation of an Arab common Market.
- 3- Non-Sectarianism: Lebanese Democratic Party will work towards a secular Lebanese State where no allegiance surpasses allegiance to the nation.
- 4- Democracy and Social Equality: Lebanon is a democratic state, where all citizens enjoy equal rights, regardless of their religious affiliations. The Lebanese Democratic Party commits itself to working in favor of social justice and balanced social development.
- 5- Free Economic System: The democratic party believes in Lebanon's free economic system and advocates the employment of the positive effects of globalization to the benefit of the country.
- 6- Preservation of Environmental Resources: The Lebanese Democratic Party is committed to preserving and enhancing Lebanon's environmental Resources. (‘The Lebanese Democratic Party’ 2003, *Prominentlebanese.com* website, [http://www.prominentlebanese.com/political\\_parties/lebanese\\_democratic\\_party.asp](http://www.prominentlebanese.com/political_parties/lebanese_democratic_party.asp) - Accessed 27 January 2005 – Attachment 7).

It appears that the Lebanese Democratic Party has been active until now and Talal Arslan, head of the party is the current minister of state responsible for the displaced (‘Profile of Lebanon’ (undated), Embassy of Lebanon, Washington DC. [http://www.lebanonembassyus.org/country\\_lebanon/cabinet.html](http://www.lebanonembassyus.org/country_lebanon/cabinet.html) - Accessed 31 January 2005 – Attachment 9; ‘Lebanese Cabinet endorses new electoral draft law’ 2005, *Daily Star*, 28 January – Attachment 10; ‘New Cabinet will have to wait for the weekend; Franjieh seeks post of interior minister’ 2004, *Daily Star*, 8 October – Attachment 11; ‘Arslan says violence in ShouEIFat is over and elections will be held’ 2004, *Daily Star*, 30 April – Attachment 12; Assaf, Nayla 2002, ‘3,000 attend rally in support of Syria: Lebanese Democratic Party hosts vocal anniversary’, 9 September

[Nayla Assaf http://www.lebanonwire.com/0209/02090905DS.asp](http://www.lebanonwire.com/0209/02090905DS.asp) - Accessed 27 January 2005 – Attachment 13).

### **3. Is there any evidence of conflict between these two groups and does this conflict result in regular armed confrontations/disputes?**

In August 1996, a man was killed and a few others were wounded in confrontation between the supporters of rival Druze leaders Talal Arslan and Walid Jumblatt in the election day rivalry ('One killed in election-day fight between rival supporters' 1996, *AFP*, 18 August - Attachment 16; 'UPDATES with poll closure, new estimates of turn-out' 1996, *AFP*, 18 August - Attachment 17; 'LEBANON: CHRISTIANS DEFY BOYCOTT CALLS TO VOTE -- AND LOSE' 1996, *Inter Press Service*, 19 August - Attachment 18; Four wounded in Lebanon election-day fight' 1996, *AFP*, 25 August - Attachment 19).

In April 2004, members of the Lebanese Democratic Parity and the Progress Socialist Party exchanged gun fire in Shoueifat and a grenade was tossed at the office of Jumblatt's PSP in Beirut in connection with the Shoueifat's municipal elections ('Arslan says violence in Shoueifat is over and elections will be held' 2004, *Daily Star*, 30 April – Attachment 12; 'Jumblat, Arslan at Loggerheads in Shweifat's Local Elections' 2004, *Naharnet*, 30 April <http://www.naharnet.com/domino/tn/NewsDesk.nsf/Lebanon/D25E589253CA4498C2256E820025B6C8?OpenDocument> – Accessed 27 January 2005 - Attachment 15).

However, no violent conflict has been reported between the two parties since then. For the relationship between them, see the following reports:

Gambill, Gary C. and Nassif, Daniel 2001, 'Walid Jumblatt Head of the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP)', *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin*, May, Vol 3, No. 5 [http://www.meib.org/articles/0105\\_id1.htm](http://www.meib.org/articles/0105_id1.htm) - Accessed 27 January 2005 – Attachment 20;

Choucair, Walid 2005, 'Parliamentary elections should ease tensions', *Daily Star*, 8 January [http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition\\_id=1&categ\\_id=2&article\\_id=11642](http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_id=1&categ_id=2&article_id=11642) – Accessed 27 January 2005 – Attachment 21;

Gambill, Gary C. and Aoun, Elie Abou 2000, 'Special Report: How Syria Orchestrates Lebanon's Elections', *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin*, May, Vol 2, No. 7 – Attachment 22;

Gambill, Gary C. 2003, 'FNC Triumphs in Baabda-Aley', *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin*, August-September, Vol 5, No. 8-9 [http://www.meib.org/articles/0308\\_12.htm](http://www.meib.org/articles/0308_12.htm) - Accessed 28 January 2005 – Attachment 23;

Gambill, Gary C. 2000, 'The Weakening of Syrian Political Patronage in Lebanon', *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin*, December, Vol 2, No. 11 [http://www.meib.org/articles/0012\\_11.htm](http://www.meib.org/articles/0012_11.htm) - Accessed 27 January 2005 – Attachment 24;

Ghaith, Hisham 1999, 'Arslan attacks sectarianism', *Daily Star*, 9 February – Attachment 25;

‘Damascus’ mediator role hampered by strong rivalries Candidates reluctant to...’  
2004, *Daily Star*, 28 April – Attachment 26;

‘Battle lines begin to harden in fight for Baabda-Aley - Final lists await the fortunes  
of ...’ 2000, *Daily Star*, 8 July – Attachment 27;

‘Jumblatt leaves slot open to avoid Hizbullah clash’ 2000, *Daily Star*, 27 July –  
Attachment 28;

‘HOT NEWS for 1/7/2000’ 2000, LibanVote.com website  
<http://www.libanvote.com/project/archive/July/news1-07-2000.html> - Accessed 31  
January 2005 – Attachment 29.

#### **4. How do the Lebanese authorities deal with any disputes or confrontations described in question 3?**

No report has been located to indicate that the authorities dealt with the confrontation between the two parties in a biased way. Subsequent to the April 2004 shoot-out, the army was deployed in the city and imposed law and order by force (‘Arslan says violence in Shoueifat is over and elections will be held’ 2004, *Daily Star*, 30 April – Attachment 12). In the 1996 incident, police opened an investigation (‘One killed in election-day fight between rival supporters’ 1996, *AFP*, 18 August - Attachment 16).

#### **List of Sources Consulted**

Internet Sources: AltaVista, Google, Vivisimo & Copernic 2001 Personal Agent

Asia Society website [http://www.asiasource.org/news/special\\_reports/archive.cfm](http://www.asiasource.org/news/special_reports/archive.cfm)

ANU Research website <http://rspas.anu.edu.au/>

Asia Week <http://www.asiaweek.com/asiaweek/>

BBC News website <http://www.bbc.co.uk>

The Guardian website <http://www.guardian.co.uk/>

CNN website <http://www.cnn.com/>

Minorities At Risk (MAR) Project <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/mar/home.htm>

Minority Rights Group International <http://www.minorityrights.org/>

<u>Databases:</u>		
Public	<i>FACTIVA</i>	Reuters Business Briefing
RRT	<i>ISYS</i>	RRT Country Research database, including Amnesty Internal, Human Rights Watch, U.S. Department of State <i>Country Reports on Human Rights Practices</i>
RRT Library	<i>FIRST</i>	RRT Library Catalogue
DIMIA	<i>BASICS</i>	Country Information
	<i>REFINFO</i>	IRBDC Research Responses (Canada)

#### **List of Attachments**

1. ‘Historical Background’ (undated), Progressive Socialist Party website.  
([http://www.psp.org.lb/flash/EN/HistoryPSP\\_en.asp](http://www.psp.org.lb/flash/EN/HistoryPSP_en.asp) - Accessed 26 January 2005)

2. *Europa World Year Book 2004*, 2004, Europa Publications, London p 2611. (RRT Library)
3. Rassemblement Canadien pour le Liban (RCPL) 2003, *Analysis of the political landscape of Lebanon*, RCPL website. (<http://www.rcplonline.org/research-study/Political%20Parties.pdf> – Accessed 28 January 2005)
4. Progressive Youth Organization - PYO, (undated), Progressive Socialist Party website. (<http://www.psp.org.lb/flash/EN/PYO.asp> - accessed 26 January 2005)
5. Bellart, Michael 2000, 'The Fault Line'. (<http://www.scripps.ohiou.edu/news/beirut/bellart.html> - Accessed 27 January 2005)
6. 'Walid Jumblatt' 2004, Wikipedia website, 14 December. ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walid\\_Jumblatt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walid_Jumblatt) - Accessed 28 January 2005)
7. 'The Lebanese Democratic Party' 2003, Prominentlebanese.com website. ([http://www.prominentlebanese.com/political\\_parties/lebanese\\_democratic\\_party.asp](http://www.prominentlebanese.com/political_parties/lebanese_democratic_party.asp) - Accessed 27 January 2005)
8. Arslan Announces the Creation of a New Political Party 2001, *IPR Strategic Information Database*, 3 July. (FACTIVA)
9. 'Profile of Lebanon' (undated), Embassy of Lebanon, Washington DC. ([http://www.lebanonembassyus.org/country\\_lebanon/cabinet.html](http://www.lebanonembassyus.org/country_lebanon/cabinet.html) - Accessed 31 January 2005)
10. 'Lebanese Cabinet endorses new electoral draft law' 2005, *Daily Star*, 28 January. (FACTIVA)
11. 'New Cabinet will have to wait for the weekend; Franjeh seeks post of interior minister' 2004, *Daily Star*. 8 October. (FACTIVA)
12. 'Arslan says violence in Shoueifat is over and elections will be held' 2004, *Daily Star*, 30 April. (FACTIVA)
13. Assaf, Nayla 2002, '3,000 attend rally in support of Syria: Lebanese Democratic Party hosts vocal anniversary', 9 September. (<http://www.lebanonwire.com/0209/02090905DS.asp> - Accessed 27 January 2005)
14. El-Khazen, Fardi (undated), 'Lebanon's Communal Elite-Mass Politics: the institutionalization of disintegration' lcps-lebanon.org website. (<http://www.lcps-lebanon.org/pub/breview/br3/fkhazen3.html> - accessed 27 January 2005)
15. 'Jumblat, Arslan at Loggerheads in Shweifat's Local Elections' 2004, *Naharnet*, 30 April. (<http://www.naharnet.com/domino/tn/NewsDesk.nsf/Lebanon/D25E589253CA4498C2256E820025B6C8?OpenDocument> – Accessed 27 January 2005)

16. 'One killed in election-day fight between rival supporters' 1996, *AFP*, 18 August. (FACTIVA)
17. 'UPDATES with poll closure, new estimates of turn-out' 1996, *AFP*, 18 August. (FACTIVA)
18. 'LEBANON: CHRISTIANS DEFY BOYCOTT CALLS TO VOTE -- AND LOSE' 1996, *Inter Press Service*, 19 August. (FACTIVA)
19. 'Four wounded in Lebanon election-day fight' 1996, *AFP*, 25 August. (FACTIVA)
20. Gambill, Gary C. and Nassif, Daniel 2001, 'Walid Jumblatt Head of the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP)', *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin*, May, Vol 3, No. 5. ([http://www.meib.org/articles/0105\\_ld1.htm](http://www.meib.org/articles/0105_ld1.htm) - Accessed 27 January 2005)
21. Choucair, Walid 2005, 'Parliamentary elections should ease tensions', *The Daily Star*, 8 January. ([http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition\\_id=1&categ\\_id=2&article\\_id=11642](http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_id=1&categ_id=2&article_id=11642) - Accessed 27 January 2005)
22. Gambill, Gary C. and Aoun, Elie Abou 2000, 'Special Report: How Syria Orchestrates Lebanon's Elections', *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin*, May, Vol 2, No. 7.
23. Gambill, Gary C. 2003, 'FNC Triumphs in Baabda-Aley', *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin*, August-September, Vol 5 No. 8-9. ([http://www.meib.org/articles/0308\\_l2.htm](http://www.meib.org/articles/0308_l2.htm) - Accessed 28 January 2005)
24. Gambill, Gary C. 2000, 'The Weakening of Syrian Political Patronage in Lebanon', *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin*, December, Vol 2 No. 11. ([http://www.meib.org/articles/0012\\_11.htm](http://www.meib.org/articles/0012_11.htm) - Accessed 27 January 2005)
25. Ghaith, Hisham 1999, 'Arslan attacks sectarianism', *Daily Star*, 9 February, 9 February. (FACTIVA)
26. 'Damascus' mediator role hampered by strong rivalries Candidates reluctant to...' 2004, *Daily Star*, 28 April. (FACTIVA)
27. 'Battle lines begin to harden in fight for Baabda-Aley - Final lists await the fortunes of ...' 2000, *Daily Star*, 8 July. (FACTIVA)
28. 'Jumblatt leaves slot open to avoid Hizbullah clash' 2000, *Daily Star*, 27 July. (FACTIVA)
29. 'HOT NEWS for 1/7/2000' 2000, LibanVote.com website. (<http://www.libanvote.com/project/archive/July/news1-07-2000.html> - Accessed 31 January 2005)