

## Hariri interview with AFP on March 8 vs. March 14

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Lebanon's Hariri would not join Hezbollah coalition

BEIRUT (AFP) — Lebanon's parliamentary majority leader said on Thursday his party would not join a unity government if the Hezbollah-led alliance wins June legislative elections, out of respect for democratic principles.

"We will not take part in the government if the March 8 (Hezbollah-led) alliance wins the elections because we are keen on the implementation of a democratic system," Saad Hariri told AFP.

In remarks published in the Saudi daily Asharq Al-Awsat, Hariri said he was not interested in forming a blocking minority in any Hezbollah-led government.

"If the March 14 alliance wins it means the Lebanese will have chosen the path of sovereignty and independence of the state," he is quoted as saying of his own political grouping.

"However, if March 8 wins everything will change. The country will have chosen another path, one of (armed) resistance (against Israel)," Hariri added.

He is the son of Rafiq Hariri, a former premier who was murdered in 2005. The assassination was widely blamed on then Lebanese power-broker Syria, which has denied any involvement.

Hezbollah is backed by Syria and Iran, while Saad Hariri's group is broadly supported by the West and Saudi Arabia.

Hezbollah has said it would seek to form a national unity government if its camp wins.

"We want to make it clear from now that we will want to establish a national unity government" with the Sunni-led coalition, Nawaf al Mussawi, a top Hezbollah official, told AFP in December.

"No one can lead Lebanon on his own and without consensus," he said.

Hezbollah has veto power over major decisions in the current unity government formed in July following a political crisis that brought Lebanon to the brink of civil war.

The crisis was defused following a Qatari-brokered deal in May that led to the election of army commander Michel Sleiman as president, formation of the unity government and a new electoral law.

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5gweTvocBvQJTtgH7gkslq1roxiOA>