

## Major events in Lebanese crisis over Special Tribunal indictment

Contributed by Patrick Gale, Daily Star staff  
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Months-old crisis has prompted leaders and diplomats from around world to weigh in

BEIRUT: The March 8 coalition announced Tuesday the failure of the Saudi-Syrian initiative to avert political turmoil in Lebanon.

Here is a time line of some of the recent major developments in the crisis over indictments relating to the 2005 assassination of statesman Rafik Hariri:

I July 16, 2010: Hizbullah Secretary General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah sparks debate over a pending tribunal indictment by labeling the court an "Israeli project" which sought to exploit Israel's penetration of Lebanon's communications network. Nasrallah claims that the tribunal will indict "rogue" Hizbullah members.

I July 30: Saudi King Abdullah and Syrian President Bashar Assad arrive in Beirut aboard the same plane for an unprecedented joint visit aimed at calming tensions. The leaders are joined by Qatari Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani. All three stress the need to maintain stability.

I Aug. 8: Nasrallah accuses Israel of assassinating former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, claiming Hizbullah has intercepted Israeli surveillance drone data. He says the party has seen Israeli spy footage of large parts of Lebanon, including the route Hariri took before his death.

I Sept. 6: Prime Minister Saad Hariri, in a newspaper interview, says that he was wrong to blame Syria for killing his father, calling the charge a "political accusation." Hariri also acknowledges that "false witnesses" may have misled investigators.

I Sept. 18: Former Lebanese General Jamil al-Sayyed, who was detained for four years in connection with Hariri's murder, returns to Beirut from Paris. Hizbullah sends a heavy security team to escort Sayyed from the airport. The former general demands that "false witnesses" stand trial.

I Oct. 3: Syria issues 33 arrest warrants for Lebanese and international officials for allegedly misleading United Nations investigators. The warrants include head of Internal Security Forces Ashraf Rifi and German prosecutor Detlev Mehlis, who initially led the initial U.N. investigation team. The warrants sour the Lebanese prime minister's relationship with Damascus.

I Nov. 10: Cabinet meets to discuss "false witnesses" but the session is adjourned by President Michel Sleiman, essentially paralyzing Lebanon's administration. March 8 ministers ask for "false witnesses" to be referred to the Judicial Council; March 14 ministers argue trial by regular judiciary is preferable. United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton voices Washington's support for the tribunal.

I Oct. 16: Assad holds talks with Abdullah at Riyadh airport. Reports suggest the tribunal and ways to maintain Lebanese stability are among the topics discussed.

I Nov. 22: King Abdullah flies to New York for surgery after herniating a disc in his back, delaying ongoing negotiations between the kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Syria.

I Dec. 15: Five weeks after its last session, Cabinet is again adjourned without making headway on the issue of "false witnesses." More than 300 agenda items are left unaddressed.

I Dec. 21: Saudi King Abdullah leaves hospital.

I Dec. 26: Abdullah contacts Assad to discuss Lebanese developments as the 86-year-old king recuperates in his New York hotel room.

I Dec. 27: Hariri meets with King Abdullah in New York.

I Jan. 6, 2011: Hariri tells a newspaper that a Syrian-Saudi agreement is in place, however, he says he is waiting for the other party to implement what it has committed to.

I Jan. 7: Hariri meets with Clinton and U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon in New York to address growing unrest in Beirut. Clinton also meets with Saudi King Abdullah and expresses Washington's "ongoing support for the special tribunal."

I Jan. 9: Hariri meets again with King Abdullah in New York.

I Jan. 10: French President Nicolas Sarkozy, who earlier in the day held talks with U.S. President Barack Obama, also meets with King Abdullah as a March 8 source voices concerns that U.S. pressure could derail the Saudi-Syrian bid to diffuse Lebanon's months-long crisis.

I Jan. 11: Change and Reform Bloc leader Michel Aoun says Saudi-Syrian initiative has failed. March 8 M.P.s demand a Cabinet meeting in which ways to confront the tribunal would be discussed, setting Hariri a decision deadline the next morning.

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