

# The War for Legitimacy

Despite the signing of the Taif accord, prospects for resolving the Lebanese crisis remain uncertain, as was accentuated by the assassination of newly elected president Rene Mawad. However, the speedy election of Elias Hrawi, to replace him, demonstrated the resilience of the moves towards ending the sectarian war.

As a consequence of the savage fighting that occurred in August, and a good deal of Arab and international pressure, the tripartite Arab committee announced the resumption of its efforts vis-a-vis Lebanon. The foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia, Morocco and Algeria held a meeting on September 13th, at the Saudi Red Sea port, Jeddah, to reassess the situation. It was their first meeting since July 28th, when they had declared the suspension of their efforts, blaming Syria for blocking their mission. At Jeddah, a seven-point plan was announced, calling for an immediate, comprehensive cease-fire and the creation of a Lebanese security committee, and urging the Lebanese parliament to convene in order to draw up a charter for national reconciliation.

Morocco's King Hassan II, Saudi Arabia's King Fahd and Algeria's Pres-

ident Shadli Ben Jedid - the three Arab leaders responsible for the committee - were well aware of the connection between the issue of a cease-fire and the political deadlock. For this reason, their envoys shuttled back and forth between Beirut and Damascus, trying to break through the vicious cycle, so that the Lebanese parliament could hold the proposed meeting. Due to great efforts to return Lebanon to normality, and active support of international power, especially the Soviet Union, the six months of savage shelling finally ended with an Arab League-sponsored cease-fire which took effect on September 22nd.

## The Taif accord

With Lebanese, Arab and international support, 62 members of the Lebanese parliament met in Taif, Saudi Arabia, on October 1st, to discuss the charter of national reconciliation drafted by the Arab three-state committee. This was the second stage of the committee's plan which had succeeded in bringing about a cease-fire in Beirut a week before. Most of the speeches delivered by Lebanese deputies at the opening session expressed the need to replace the language of fire and destruction with that of dialogue. Since the failure of the Taif meeting would have opened the way for renewed fighting, the legislators seemed determined to reach an agreement, adopting the «no failure» slogans raised by the former prime minister, Saeb Salam, at the opening session (*Al Safir*, October 2nd).



Two main points - political reform and the sovereignty clause (pertaining to Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon), were subject to heated debate among the deputies. Only the section of the peace plan dealing with the necessity of Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon, was unanimously approved without any wrangling.

In reference to the sovereignty clause, George Saadeh, leader of the right-wing Phalangist Party, and the most prominent of the Christian deputies in Taif, said: «We are asking for guarantees, clarifications and amendments on the sovereignty clause. If we don't agree on that clause, the rest of the agreement collapses» (AP, October 16th). Tension eased after the intervention of Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al Faisal who crowned his moves with a successful visit to Damascus. He convinced the Lebanese parliamentarians to postpone reforms instead.

After 23 days of debate, 59 of the 62 deputies present, including the representatives of the Phalangist Party, voted for the accord on October 23rd, despite the opposition of General Aoun who termed it «a crime that legalizes Syria's presence in Lebanon» and «an agreement leading to hell» (*Guardian*, October 24th). In addition

