

Print media also resorted to "shorthand" reporting, using generalized identity-group labels to identify the protagonists: "Christians versus Muslims" or "Maronites," "Shi'ites," and so on.<sup>2</sup> Workshop participants called for greater subtlety in this regard, decrying the popular clichés used when describing the conflict: "It is too simplistic to label all Arab nationalists as Muslims and all Lebanese nationalists as Christians. Furthermore, the so-called Maronite establishment is not representative of the entire Maronite community; there were Christian supporters of both the Palestinian and National Movements, and there was a definite class aspect to the crisis, which transcended the sectarian divide." As Georges Corm stressed, there was a fantastic rivalry among competing groups **within** the so-called Christian block, and **within** the so-called Muslim block: "Quarrels within the movements have been much more intensive than the Christian-Muslim problem." There also tended to be enormous dissent within a sect, as attested by the prolific amount of intra-sectarian fighting. Participants agreed that especially at the beginning of the crisis, there was **not** a strict line of intersectarian division. After the violence erupted, however, group identity became an increasingly divisive issue, principally because of militia actions: the warlords engaged in considerable sectarian-based violence, compelling Lebanese civilians to take refuge, both psychologically and physically, in sectarian ghettos that were "protected" by same-sect militias. In this way, militia leaders appropriated the mantle of "legitimacy" through the appearance of popular support. The international media reinforced this perception by focussing on the views of authorized militia leaders, rather than giving time to non-militia voices.

This report will give a brief overview of some of the principal issues that inflamed the nation on the eve of 1975. These issues include domestic disagreement over Lebanon's identity and role in the region; socioeconomic imbalances; the political system; and pressures imposed by regional players (notably the Palestinians and Israel).

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<sup>2</sup> Double quotation marks indicate citations from workshop discussions or words used in an ironic sense. In addition, these marks alert the reader to words or terms that have often been abused in discussions about Lebanon. Marked terms indicate the need for subtle qualifications that, for space reasons, are not possible to repeat every time.