

A WORLD IN MOTION



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After a two-year stalemate, Lebanon has finally appointed a new president—one with a Christian background but ties to Iran and Hezbollah.

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The World Giving Index takes a look at which nations are the most generous, both financially and with their time.

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PROJECT EAGLE WINGS supports a Chinese missionary family sharing the Gospel in South Asia.



THE NUMBERS:

LEBANON



29 months

The length of time for which Lebanon had a presidential vacuum



1985

The year in which Lebanon's Hezbollah officially announced its establishment



15.5 years

The length of Lebanon's civil war (1975-1990)



18

The number of officially recognised religious sects in Lebanon

LEBANON FINALLY APPOINTS NEW PRESIDENT



Lebanon's lawmakers elected Michel Aoun, an Iran-backed politician and former general, as president on Monday, ending more than two years the country has gone without a leader. Aoun, 81, is an ally of Hezbollah, the Shiite militia and political party backed by Iran that has helped Syrian President Bashar Assad survive a five-year civil war on Lebanon's border. The vote for Aoun, by 83 of parliament's 127 members, shows Iran-backed political factions shouldered past those aligned with Saudi Arabia, replacing Syria as Lebanon's chief foreign power broker. Aoun's "victory now is a victory for Hezbollah and that alliance, and certainly a kind of black eye for Saudi Arabia," said Paul Salem, vice president for policy and research at the Middle East Institute, a think tank in Washington. (*USA Today*)

Lebanon's Christian heritage

Other than Israel, Lebanon is the only country in the Arab world not recognised as an 'Arab Muslim' country – officially, it is recognised as the only Christian nation in the Middle East. Lebanon's Christian heritage dates back to the first century, making it one of the oldest Christian societies in the world. A recent study showed that more than 90 percent of Lebanese Christian families are direct descendants of the original early Christians. Due to a civil war between Muslim and Christian factions that resulted in thousands of Christians fleeing to the West, the country slowly lost its Christian majority, but believers there still cling to the hope that this will one day change.

According to Lebanon's constitution, the president must be a Maronite Christian, the prime

minister a Sunni Muslim, and the speaker of parliament a Shiite Muslim.

Local role players

Because of political infighting since 2014 (when then-president Michel Suleiman's six-year term expired), there have been 45 unsuccessful sessions to elect a new president, leaving the country without a leader for two years. Now the parliament has elected an Iran- and Hezbollah-backed candidate to lead the country, prompting questions about how this will affect Lebanon, especially in the shadow of the Syrian war. Because of President Aoun's alignments with Hezbollah and Iran (the Shiite regional power), Lebanon could lose some international aid (due to the connections to Syria's Iran-backed President Assad). The Sunni kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Iran's arch enemy, will also be concerned about and angered by President Aoun's appointment, as their ambitions to exert influence over the country will be hampered.

Hezbollah views Lebanon as a highly strategic country. The militant group – created to be a 'proxy agent' for Iranian attacks on Israel without direct implications – uses Lebanon as a main staging ground for attacks on the Jewish nation. At present, the Lebanese Hezbollah is also focused on defending the country against an Islamic State invasion on its northern borders with Syria, as well as helping the Syrian regime to defend Damascus against both the Islamic State and Syrian rebel groups aiming to overthrow the president.

In such conditions, Lebanon's political elite face more challenges that just ensuring stability in the country. According to a press report by *Associated Press*, President Aoun (in his first speech since his appointment) pledged to fight corruption and to protect Lebanon from the 'fires raging around it' (referring to the Syrian war in particular). He also promised to liberate contested territory under 'Israeli

NEWS HEADLINES



The US policy of trying to persuade **North Korea** to give up its nuclear weapons "is probably a lost cause" and the best that could be hoped for is a cap on the country's nuclear capability, the Director of US National Intelligence said. However, underscoring conflicting views in the Obama administration, the State Department said US policy was unchanged and continued to be to seek the "verifiable denuclearisation" of the Korean peninsula.



Iraqi forces battled Islamic State fighters on the edge of Mosul as the two-week campaign to recapture the jihadists' last main bastion in Iraq entered a new phase of urban warfare. Artillery and air strikes pounded the city, still home to 1.5 million people, and residents of the eastern neighbourhood of al-Quds said the ultra-hardline Sunni militants had resorted to street fighting to try to hold the army back.



China will carry out military drills in the South China Sea, the country's maritime safety administration said, ordering all other shipping to stay away. China routinely holds drills in the disputed waterway, and the latest exercises come less than a week after a US navy destroyer sailed near the Paracel Islands, prompting a warning from Chinese warships to leave the area.

occupation' (territory that Israel considers part of the Golan Heights, which was taken from Lebanon during the 1967 war).

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

Despite its challenges, Lebanon remains a beacon of hope in an area dominated by destructive wars. Over the past four years, more than 1.5 million refugees from Syria have settled in Lebanon. Because of its Christian heritage, most Syrian and Iraqi Christians chose to flee there rather than to Turkey. As for Muslim refugees in Lebanon, they constitute a vast mission opportunity.

INcontext asked a Christian leader from Lebanon about the likely impact that the newly-elected president will have on the Christian population. Pastor Hanani (not his real name) said that in terms of political governance, little would

change and life for the most part will continue as it always has been. Speaking of the Lebanese Church, he said, "Pray for the workers of the harvest, not the harvest." According to Pastor Hanani, the war in Syria has caused millions of Muslims to become disillusioned about their supposed 'religion of peace', and because of this, it has become 'easy' to share the good news of Jesus with Muslim refugees. Literally hundreds of Muslim refugee families have come to Christ in Lebanon. "The harvest is more than you can imagine – what we need is workers that will reap the harvest."

PRAY > For President Aoun to lead in Godly wisdom > For peace and stability to prevail in Lebanon > For many workers to go to Lebanon in response to the massive mission opportunities

WHAT MAKES A NATION GENEROUS?



A war-torn state and a country ruled by an oppressive military junta for decades is home to the world's most generous people, research suggests. People in Iraq are the kindest to strangers, while Myanmar's residents give the most away, according to the *Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) World Giving Index 2016*. In the last month, eight in 10 Iraqis have helped someone they don't know, with Libyans helping almost as many. During the same period, 91% of those in Myanmar have given money to charity. In comparison, 63% of Americans – the second most generous overall – have donated money, with 73% helping a stranger. **(BBC)**

Summary of findings

According to this recently published report, those who hurt the most also help strangers the most. The report is based on research from 140 countries across the globe, with the fieldwork done by Gallup as part of the World Poll Initiative. A total of 148,000 people were interviewed, with the focus on individual giving, helping and serving rather than on government spending. The research covered three questions (Have you given money to a good cause? Have you helped a stranger? Have you volunteered your time?) and the findings point to the global East giving more than the West, with countries like Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Indonesia donating more money than the United States, United Kingdom and Norway.

Of the top 10 countries where people help strangers the most, only one (the US at number

9) is from the West. Three of the top 10 countries (Iraq, Libya and Somalia) are currently affected by civil war. South Africa, which ranked 10th in 2015, dropped nine places to number 19. In terms of countries where people volunteer the most time for 'good causes', six of the top 10 are in the global East, with Turkmenistan, Myanmar and Indonesia ranked as the top three. Overall, the report concludes that the global East (Asia, Africa and Oceania) 'gives' more than the global West (Americas and Europe): 43% compared to 35%. China, however, was an exception for the East, ranking as the least giving country in the world – just six percent gave money to charity, four percent offered time, and 24 percent helped a stranger.

Theories about generosity

Analysts have suggested that countries like Iraq and Myanmar rank so high on the giving index because their cultures impose and enable such behaviour. Up to 70 percent of Myanmar's citizens practice Theravada Buddhism, which places a heavy emphasis on lay devotees supporting the community of ordained monks and nuns through charitable giving. Myanmar has an estimated 500,000 monks – the highest proportion of monks-to-population of all Buddhist countries. Arab cultures, meanwhile, are known for their focus on the extended family, and for the hospitality that is a common characteristic of Muslim communities around the world. Families judge themselves and each other by generosity to guests being entertained. Guests are welcomed into homes and are shown kindness regardless of whether they are relatives, friends, neighbours or strangers. For Iraqis, being helpful to strangers would be an intrinsic part of their culture.

Another theory is that those who have experienced the most hurt are most willing to help. The internal conflict in Myanmar (previously known as Burma) began after the country received independence from the United Kingdom in 1948 and is one of the world's longest running civil wars. Iraq's history, too, is characterised by wars and civil uprisings, and with

NEWS HEADLINES



French authorities have begun moving 1,500 migrant children from the Calais "Jungle" camp, a week after demolition began. The unaccompanied children will be taken to reception centres around the country. They had been living in converted shipping containers hoping to travel to the UK. France and the UK have argued over where the migrant children should go, with France urging the UK to take in more. The UK has so far taken in about 270 of the children who have relatives in the UK or are deemed particularly vulnerable.



Armed groups in **South Sudan** released 145 children on Tuesday, the UN children's agency (UNICEF) said, calling on warring parties to stop recruiting child soldiers as the world's youngest nation teeters on the brink of renewed civil war. Some 16,000 children serve in armed forces in South Sudan, with an estimated 800 newly recruited in 2016, UNICEF said.



Russia is sharply upgrading the firepower of its Baltic Fleet by adding warships armed with long-range cruise missiles to counter NATO's build-up in the region, Russian media reported.

the current war against the Islamic State (IS), the Iraqis have more reason to ask for help than to offer it to strangers.

The CAF report included the following statement: "We continue to be humbled by signs of generosity across the globe in times of adversity, with people rallying when there is a greater need within the population. Iraq, for the second year, occupies the number one position on helping a stranger despite the ongoing civil war whilst Libya, interviewed for the first time since 2012, has increased on this measure despite their bloody civil war. It appears that their increasingly fragile civil societies, coupled with greater need amongst the population, is encouraging more people to be responsive out of sheer necessity."

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

The early New Testament Church was characterised by selfless giving, sharing of belongings, fellowship and kindness towards strangers (Acts 2:42-47 as an example). This foundation of Christianity spread out from the Middle East across the world. How is it then that Buddhist and Islamic nations feature more prominently on this 'index of generosity' than nations that were largely established on Biblical principles? It is disturbing to note that so few Western nations feature in the top ten of the CAF

index, in terms of financial giving (especially considering the wealth in the West) and helping of strangers and offering time for a good cause (the latter two possibly being more important than money).

One could argue that the value of studies such as the CAF index is limited and the research is flawed (an approximate 1,000 interviews were used to generalise entire population groups/cultures). However, the report should serve as a wake-up call to Christians in the West, and a prompt to consider the extent to which individual lives are reflecting Christ on a day-to-day basis.

Winston S. Churchill famously said: "We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give." And John Bunyan made the following statement: "You have not lived today until you have done something for someone who can never repay you." Let these convictions inspire the Church to live more generously for the sake of others.

PRAY > For the Western Church to be stirred into more public acts of generosity that will be a witness to Christ > For open hearts in the non-Christian world to translate into an openness to the Gospel

A GUEST PERSPECTIVE ON CLINTON



The following opinion article is once again by an American guest writer, Luke Smith, supplementary to the previous edition's article on Donald Trump.

There are few roles in politics that Hillary Clinton has not held: First Lady of the United States, Senator from New York, Secretary of State, and now the first female presidential nominee from a major party. America would look different without Hillary Clinton, not to mention her husband or the philanthropic Clinton Foundation made possible by Bill Clinton's two-term presidency. The Clinton family has a special connection to the American political scene, and with such knowledge and involvement comes a certain responsibility. Fellow candidate Donald Trump turned this connection into an accusation during the second debate, asking her why she had not "fixed anything" in the past thirty years.

The opposite side of Mr Trump's 'responsibility' argument is that Ms Clinton's experience works in her favour. Many are therefore asking how she might put all of her experience and connections to work for the good of America.

According to Ms Clinton's detractors, a negative aspect of her experience as First Lady is the inside connection she has to the Clinton Foundation. Created as a philanthropic organisation funded by private donations, the Foundation has been connected to Ms Clinton's political campaign. The *Washington Post* reported that Bill Clinton's organisation for good has become more than a 'retirement project offering speaking engagements and funding to carry out acts of philanthropy' – suspicions supported by Wikileaks tell of contracts made with donor companies that have led to a lucrative income for the former president. These contracts were for consultative work, not charitable pursuits. Many on the Republican side say these conflicts of interest degrade the honesty of Hillary Clinton, whose connection to the Foundation (even by name) is enough of a cause for concern for them.

Perhaps more concerning, however, is the recent letter that FBI Director James Comey sent to Congress, stating that Hillary Clinton's email activity as Secretary of State is once again an item of interest. Disgraced politician Anthony Weiner (the estranged husband of Ms Clinton's top aide, Huma Abedin) is believed to have had classified emails on his computer, which were related to Ms Clinton's time as Secretary of State. By way of association, controversial emails are once again the focus of national attention, just days before the most important election of Ms Clinton's life, and many are asking whether they are evidence of criminal activity or can be explained away by a complicated web of association and 'grey' email

FOR FURTHER REFERENCE

INcontext Website:

www.incontextministries.org

Please visit our website for up-to-date information on events around the world.

If you have any questions or comments relating to the articles in this publication or on the website, please feel free to contact us at any time.



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classification standards for government employees.

Despite the negative attention that Ms Clinton is currently receiving, there is no denying the appeal of her campaign message to millions of Americans, who have shown their support in pre-election national polls.

During the height of the presidential debate schedule, the *Washington Post* conducted a poll concerning predictions for the electoral vote results. According to the polls, Ms Clinton had a fair lead and she continues to gain. Going by the states in which she is currently ahead, Ms Clinton could win as many as 244 electoral votes. In the American electoral procedure, a candidate is selected by electoral votes gained in the electoral college, not solely by the popular vote (although popular vote directly affects the results in the college). The same *Washington Post* poll predicted that 126 electoral votes would go to Mr Trump. A victory such as this would amount to a 'landslide' win, possibly by a double-digit margin in the popular vote.

Another poll from *Real Clear Politics* (which draws from sources like the *Economist*, *Fox News* and *Pew Research*) points to a clear lead for Ms Clinton: as of October 28, she was polling at 47.1 compared to Mr Trump's 42.5. By these estimates, she would lead the electoral college by 252 to 126 (with 'toss-up states' included).

If Hillary Clinton does win, one of her challenges will be dealing with the aftermath of the election campaign – an advisor said that Ms Clinton would have to repair the damage that Mr Trump wreaked on American foreign policy by his

rhetoric. According to Ms Clinton's campaign staff, she will see to "reassuring" allies and "reinforcing a message of deterrence to adversaries". (It is important to note, however, like Nahal Toosi of *Politico*, that President Obama's policies have influenced the world in tangible and practical ways, while Mr Trump has only had a rhetorical effect thus far.)

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

At this time, the key question is whether Ms Clinton's experience and connections benefit a nation at a crossroads with healthcare costs, foreign policy entanglements, employment concerns and contentious social issues. It could be argued that an experienced stateswoman would have more tried-and-true policy knowledge that would help America through the storm, but it can also be said that Ms Clinton has had many years to address these issues in Congress and in the State Department and that another type of leadership may be needed. Is Mr Trump or Ms Clinton the better choice?

Ultimately, God knows the heart of man in ways we cannot (Proverbs 20:27) and He has more insight into political candidates than we ever could. For this very reason, personal opinions matter little – any believer searching for an answer will gain the most by going directly to God in prayer, and this is the only way that American believers can decide how to vote.

PRAY > For the truth about the controversies surrounding Ms Clinton to be made clear > For God's will to prevail in the upcoming elections > For God to bless America to be a blessing to the rest of the world

KNOWLEDGE TO ACTION

PROJECT EAGLE WINGS

Supporting a Chinese missionary couple working in South Asia



China remains one of the most strategic nations within a mission context. The biggest and longest revival in Christian history is slowly but surely transforming into a mission movement. This movement presents the global Church with one of the biggest opportunities of this generation. Chinese missionaries are preparing to enter the unreached world with a life-changing message and with the Kingdom of God as their goal.

INcontext was approached by leaders of the house church movement to partner in this ground-breaking endeavour of sending out Chinese missionaries into

the 10/40 window. A Chinese missionary couple was commissioned to a South Asian country, and INcontext has committed to supporting them.

To support this young family, please make use of the INcontext bank details and use EAGLEWINGS together with your email address (as much as possible of it) as reference.

If you have any questions about this project, please contact our project department (gustav@incontextministries.org) or visit the website.