

# THE ASSASSINATION OF RAFIK HARIRI

## Introduction

### Focus

This *News in Review* story focuses on a CBC investigative documentary that has uncovered important information about the assassination of prominent Lebanese political leader Rafik Hariri in 2005. The information in the documentary has potentially explosive implications for that country and the entire Middle East.

### Did you know . . .

Canada considers Hezbollah to be a terrorist organization.

In late November 2010, the CBC broadcast an in-depth investigative documentary prepared by veteran journalist Neil Macdonald. Its subject was the still-unsolved assassination of Rafik Hariri, an important political leader and former prime minister of Lebanon who was killed by a powerful car bomb on the streets of Beirut in 2005. For years after that bloody crime, which had also left over 20 others dead or wounded at the scene, a United Nations investigation into Hariri's murder had inched along at a snail's pace, making very little progress in identifying those responsible and bringing them to justice. For their part, prominent members of Lebanon's government—including even Hariri's own son Saad—were extremely reluctant to pursue the leader's killers too aggressively for fear that it would lead to further political instability.

Macdonald's documentary placed the blame for Hariri's murder on Hezbollah, a powerful Shi'ite Muslim political faction in Lebanon with its own private militia. Hezbollah has gained an international reputation for its extreme hostility to Israel and enjoys the political and military backing of Syria and Iran. Its leader, Sheik Hassan Nasrallah, is a charismatic figure who many in the Arab world see as personifying the struggle

against Israel and its main backer, the United States. Hezbollah commands considerable support in Lebanon and throughout the Middle East for its steadfast opposition to Israel.

Strong evidence from the CBC documentary, much of it uncovered by a minor Lebanese military intelligence officer who eventually paid with his life for his investigations, clearly pointed to Hezbollah's involvement in Hariri's murder. Hariri was a political enemy of Hezbollah and had advocated the withdrawal of Syrian troops from his country, a move Hezbollah opposed. Moreover, he was seen as a moderate who was working for peace among the various religious and political factions that are often at loggerheads in Lebanon and was also a friend of the United States. Rejecting all the evidence linking his group to Hariri's murder, Nasrallah instead claimed that Israel had been responsible for the deed and angrily warned that if any members of his organization were indicted, the consequences for Lebanon would be very grave. Given that country's recent history of political and religious violence, including a bloody civil war that lasted from 1975 to 1990, leaving over 150 000 Lebanese dead, this was no idle threat.

## To Consider

1. Why do you think very little progress had been made in identifying those responsible for Hariri's murder?
2. To what extent should Canadians be concerned about the truth being told about the assassination?
3. How does this story reinforce the importance of investigative journalism?

# THE ASSASSINATION OF RAFIK HARIRI

## *Video Review*

### **Did you know . . .**

Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims, Christians, and Druze are the four main religious groups in Lebanon. They have been fighting against each other throughout the country's history.

### **Pre-viewing Questions**

With a partner or in a small group, discuss and respond to the following questions.

1. How much do you know about the conflict in the Middle East and the main countries and groups involved in it?

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2. How much do you know about the country of Lebanon and how the Middle East conflict has affected it?

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3. Why do you think political groups sometimes resort to the tactic of assassinating their opponents? Can you think of any recent examples of political assassinations, either successful or unsuccessful?

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4. Why do you think some countries are more prone to acts of political violence, including assassinations and revolts, than Canada is?

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5. How can a piece of investigative journalism, such as a television documentary on an unsolved crime, lead to a solution of the mystery? Can you think of any examples?

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### **Viewing Questions**

As you watch the video, respond to the questions in the spaces provided.

1. What Arab neighbour of Lebanon has stationed troops there for years?

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2. What is the name of the Lebanese Shi'ite Muslim group whose militia is more powerful than Lebanon's army?

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3. What Middle Eastern country has attacked Lebanon on numerous occasions?

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4. Who was Rafik Hariri? When, where, and how was he killed?

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5. Who was the Lebanese police captain who believed he had solved the mystery of Hariri's assassination, and what happened to him?

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6. What two demands had Hariri been making prior to his assassination?

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7. What criticisms were directed at the UN investigation into Hariri's murder?

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8. How did Wissam Eid use records of cell phone calls to implicate Hezbollah in Hariri's killing?

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9. What were the "red" and "blue" networks of cell phones that Eid believed were involved in the plot to assassinate Hariri?

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10. What happened to Wissam Eid on January 25, 2008?

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11. Why are Lebanon's political leaders, including Hariri's son Saad, reluctant to pursue the investigation into the assassination if it proves that Hezbollah was involved in it?

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12. How has Hezbollah responded to the accusations that it was responsible for assassinating Hariri?

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13. According to former U.S. Middle East envoy Scott Carpenter, how likely is it that Hezbollah will ever be brought to account for Hariri's assassination?
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### Post-viewing Questions

1. Now that you have watched the video, revisit your responses to the Pre-viewing Questions. How has watching this video helped you to respond to the questions in greater depth?
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2. Do you think the evidence presented in the CBC investigative documentary is sufficient to prove that Hezbollah was responsible for the assassination of Rafik Hariri? Why or why not?
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3. Do you think it is likely that any indictments issued against Hezbollah members for Hariri's assassination might lead to a new civil war in Lebanon? Why or why not?
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4. Do you agree with former U.S. envoy Scott Carpenter that Hariri's assassination is likely to be a case of "getting away with murder"? Why or why not?
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# THE ASSASSINATION OF RAFIK HARIRI

## *The Life and Death of “Mr. Lebanon”*

### Focus for Reading

As you read this section, focus on what you consider to be the highlights in the life and career of Rafik Hariri. Which helped him to become a successful businessman and an important political figure in Lebanon?

### To Consider

Why might someone who was a multimillionaire choose to go into politics, an occupation that doesn't pay a huge amount of money?

### Early Years

The blast that killed Rafik Hariri, along with 21 others, on a downtown Beirut street on February 14, 2005, marked the abrupt and untimely end of a brilliant political career. To his many supporters in the country, Hariri enjoyed the nickname “Mr. Lebanon” for his efforts at achieving reconciliation and reconstruction after the country's violent civil war. But to his almost equally numerous opponents, he was viewed with suspicion as someone who opposed Syria's presence in the country and was overly friendly to the United States and its Middle Eastern proxy state, Israel. Hariri commanded a strong popular base among Lebanon's Sunni Muslim community, of which he was a member, along with the country's large Christian and Druze minorities. But to the 40 per cent of the population subscribing to the Shi'ite branch of the Islamic faith, most of whom supported Hezbollah, Hariri was regarded far less favourably.

Rafik Hariri was born into a Sunni Muslim family of modest means on November 1, 1944. His parents considered the education of Hariri and his siblings to be of primary importance, and after completing high school he took a degree in business administration at Beirut's Arab University. His golden opportunity came after moving to Saudi Arabia in 1965. There he joined a French construction firm that was

contracted to build one of the country's first deluxe hotels in Ta'if. Hariri completed this project so successfully that the Saudi royal family gave the firm an exclusive contract for all its future mega-construction plans. Within only a few years, thanks to his wealthy Saudi sponsors, Rafik Hariri had become a self-made multimillionaire. He would go on to amass a personal fortune that eventually earned him a spot on *Forbes* magazine's list of the world's 100 wealthiest individuals.

### Rise of a Politician

Hariri lived for many years in Saudi Arabia, cultivating his contacts with his personal friend Prince Fahd. When Fahd became king he appointed Hariri his representative at many international conferences and diplomatic discussions whose purpose was to resolve the long-running and violent civil war that had broken out in his native Lebanon in 1975. At the same time, Hariri also involved himself in numerous philanthropic projects designed to provide financial aid to the many victims of the civil war and to rebuild Lebanon's shattered infrastructure. His diplomatic skills also paid off in 1989, when Saudi Arabia brokered the Ta'if Accord, which ended the Lebanese civil war and committed the warring factions to work together to achieve national reconciliation and power-sharing in its uncertain aftermath.

**Did you know . . .**  
Rafik Hariri donated \$12-million of his own money to help clean up the streets of Beirut.

In the early 1990s, with the war over, the time proved right for Hariri's return to his home country. By now a very successful businessman whose personal fortune was estimated in the tens of millions of dollars and growing rapidly, he was ready to enter Lebanon's fractious political arena. Many moderates saw him as a consensus-builder who might be able to overcome the bitter political divisions that were a legacy of the war. Lebanese Sunni Muslims and Christians especially endorsed him as someone who could stand up to the increasing influence of the large and well-organized Shi'ite minority and its rising political and military faction, Hezbollah. In 1992, Hariri became Prime Minister of Lebanon for the first time and immediately set to work attracting foreign investment and loans to help rebuild the country's war-ravaged economy.

As the head of a large construction company called Soliere, which was supported by both the Lebanese government and substantial foreign investors, Hariri unveiled an ambitious plan called "Horizon 2000." The plan would promote post-war reconstruction, especially in the capital, Beirut. He attracted billions of dollars in low-interest loans from foreign backers, largely as a result of the many contacts he had made in international financial circles. His goal was to create a business-friendly environment in Lebanon, showcasing it to the world, and especially to the West as a stable, modern, and peaceful country. Under his supervision, Beirut was transformed from a crumbling war zone into an attractive, bustling seaside city with tall office buildings, wide, tree-lined thoroughfares, state-of-the-art hospitals and schools, and a thriving cultural scene. However, a financial crisis at the end of the 1990s slowed the nation's

recovery and temporarily cast a cloud over Hariri's political prospects, and he was forced to leave office in 1998.

### **Hariri's Last Struggles**

In 2000, Hariri again assumed the position of Prime Minister of Lebanon. By this time the country was facing three serious challenges: the long-running Syrian occupation, the rising influence of Hezbollah, and frequent Israeli military incursions into the south of the country. Although Hariri was a strong opponent of Hezbollah, he was forced to acknowledge that it was the only group powerful enough to resist Israel and defend Lebanon's southern frontier. And while he bitterly resented Syria's military presence in his country—and the political leverage this gave Damascus over Lebanese politics—he was also enough of a realist to recognize that it was not going to end any time soon. At a high-level meeting with Syria's President Bashar al-Assad in August 2004, Hariri was warned not to oppose extending the term of his political rival, Emile Lahoud, as the country's president. According to one witness at the meeting, al-Assad is supposed to have told Hariri, "Lahoud is me, and if you want me out of Lebanon, I will break Lebanon" ("Biography: Mr. Rafik Hariri," [www.hariri.com/english.aspx?ID=466](http://www.hariri.com/english.aspx?ID=466)). This was seen by many as a thinly veiled threat against Hariri's life.

Unable to resolve the growing conflicts in his country, Hariri left office for the last time on October 20, 2004, but remained a potent force on Lebanon's increasingly dangerous political stage. On February 14, 2005, as his motorcade drove past the St. George Hotel, a mammoth explosion ripped apart his vehicle, causing a scene of total devastation. The bomb that killed Hariri, his bodyguards, the former finance minister, and many other innocent

bystanders, was estimated to have the explosive power of 1 000 kg of TNT. For “Mr. Lebanon,” it marked the abrupt end of a political career that appeared far from over, and for his many supporters in the country it was a moment of grief, followed by anger and loud demands

that his killers be identified and held to account for his murder. The site of what his followers call his “martyrdom” is now marked by a larger-than-life statue of Hariri and a sign that indicates the number of days that have elapsed since his assassination.

### **Follow-up**

1. With a partner or in a small group, compare your responses with the Focus for Reading at the beginning of this section. What factors do you consider to have been most important in accounting for Rafik Hariri’s success in business and politics?
2. With your partner or group, prepare a brief obituary of Rafik Hariri based on the information in this section, evaluating his life and achievements and how his assassination has affected Lebanon and the Middle East.

# THE ASSASSINATION OF RAFIK HARIRI

## *Lebanon: Historical Background*

**Did you know . . .**  
Beirut is nicknamed “the Paris of the Middle East.” This is a reflection of the French legacy in Lebanon.

### Focus for Reading

In your notebook create an organizer like the one below. As you read the following information on the history of Lebanon, record key points in your organizer. You should be able to enter at least two or three points in each section of your chart. You will be using this information in the activities that follow the text material.

Lebanon: Historical Background <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lebanon won its independence from France in 1943.</li><li>• It is an Arab country in the Middle East with Christian, Muslim, and Druze inhabitants.</li><li>• Lebanon tried to stay out of the conflicts between Israel and the Arab states during the 1950s and 60s.</li><li>• The influx of Palestinian refugees after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war complicated Lebanon’s political situation.</li></ul>
Independence and the Legacy of Colonialism <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li></ul>
Civil War and Foreign Intervention <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li></ul>
The Rise of Hezbollah <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li></ul>
The “Cedar Revolution” <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li></ul>

“The problem with Lebanon is perfectly simple, even if the Western powers prefer to ignore it. It is a confessional [religious-based] state . . . created by the French. The problem is that to become a modern state it must de-confessionalize [become non-religious]. But Lebanon cannot do so. Its identity is sectarianism [religious divisions] and that is its tragedy. And it has, President Sarkozy please take note, a French beginning point.” — Robert Fisk (“Lebanon in limbo: A nation haunted by the murder of Rafiq Hariri,” *The Independent*, January 14, 2011)

### Independence and the Legacy of Colonialism

The Middle Eastern nation of Lebanon achieved its independence on November 22, 1943. Prior to that date, it had been under French control, granted to that

country as a League of Nations mandate at the end of the First World War. A predominantly Arab nation, Lebanon had been part of the Ottoman or Turkish Empire for centuries until it collapsed in 1918 after losing the war as an ally of Germany.

Under a National Covenant that the major Lebanese political parties agreed to shortly before achieving independence from France, governmental power was to be shared among the various religious communities living in Lebanon on the basis of the 1932 census. At that time, Christians formed a slight majority of the population. The country’s large Muslim minority was split between Sunni and Shi’ite branches. And there was also a small but influential Druze minority, located mainly in the rural northern part of the country.



**Did you know . . .**

One of the most deadly attacks against the U.S. military occurred in Beirut in 1983. The militant Shi'ite militia called Amal, the predecessor of Hezbollah, planted two bombs that killed 241 U.S. Marines and 56 French paratroopers.

During the first decades following its independence, Lebanon emerged as a moderate, prosperous, and pro-Western state in the Middle East, under the guidance of President Camille Chamoun. It sought to remain aloof from the growing hostilities between Israel and its Arab neighbours, especially Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. It played no active role in the dramatic 1967 Six Day War that saw Israel emerge victorious over its foes. One of the results of that conflict was the expulsion of large numbers of Palestinians from areas falling under Israeli control. Many of these refugees fled north to Lebanon, where they formed an influential minority and further complicated the country's already divisive political culture. By the early 1970s, Yasser Arafat, the chairman of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), had established his political and military headquarters in Beirut, much to the chagrin of the country's anti-Palestinian Christian population.

**Civil War and Foreign Intervention**

On April 13, 1975, an armed group from a pro-Christian party attacked a bus in Beirut, killing 27 Palestinian passengers. This ambush lit the fuse of a long-simmering sectarian conflict between Christians and Muslims in Lebanon and touched off a bloody civil war that was to last until 1990. During this tragic period in Lebanon's history, the country descended into a downward spiral of political and religious conflict, which was exacerbated by foreign interventions from Syria in the north and Israel in the south. Each of these countries sent troops into Lebanon and used their influence to set up and arm local militias. Despite a number of United Nations resolutions calling on Syria and Israel to withdraw their troops, both countries justified their presence on Lebanese soil on the

grounds of national security and ensuring stability for the Middle East.

Following Israel's second invasion of Lebanon in 1982, apparently designed to halt PLO rocket attacks on its northern borders, the pro-Israeli Christian militia went on a rampage in the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila in West Beirut, slaughtering a large number of innocent civilians. Despite its protests that it had played no active part in the massacre, Israel was sharply criticized, and a year later negotiated a troop-withdrawal agreement with Lebanon. Meanwhile, the Syrian military presence in Lebanon remained in place, along with an international peacekeeping force—composed of troops from Italy, France, and the United States—who arrived in Beirut in 1982.

By the late 1980s, Lebanon's civil war had dragged on for over a decade, with neither side showing any willingness to compromise. The country was ruled by two rival governments—a mainly Muslim regime based in West Beirut and a Christian authority in the eastern part of the capital. However, in late 1989, representatives of the warring Lebanese political factions met in the Saudi Arabian city of Ta'if and, facing considerable pressure from that country and other Arab neighbours, agreed to sign the Charter of National Reconciliation.

Under its terms, the president would always be a Maronite Christian, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim, and the speaker of the national assembly a Shi'ite Muslim. Following a complicated formula, a designated number of cabinet posts would be allocated to each religious group, including the Druze. By 1990, with Syria using its military muscle to crush any lingering opposition to the deal from a hold-out Christian faction, the Lebanese civil war was effectively over. The conflict had claimed

**Did you know . . .**

May 25, the day that Israeli troops withdrew from Lebanon, was proclaimed a national holiday celebrating "resistance and liberation."

the lives of over 150 000 Lebanese, most of them civilians, and had left Beirut practically in ruins.

**The Rise of Hezbollah**

One of the most significant developments in the post-civil-war period in Lebanon was the rise of Hezbollah, the "Party of God," and its charismatic leader, Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah. Commanding the allegiance of Lebanon's large Shi'ite Muslim population, much of it based in Beirut and the southern part of the country, Hezbollah has become in effect a "state within a state," and has used its political and military influence to shape the course of Lebanese politics. Alone among any Arab nation or military faction, it can justifiably claim credit for defeating vastly superior Israeli forces on the field of battle. In 2000, its continual harassment of occupying Israeli troops in the south led to their complete and unconditional withdrawal.

In the summer of 2006, Israel launched a massive air and sea attack on Lebanon after Hezbollah had captured two of its soldiers. Civilian deaths resulting from Israeli air strikes aroused widespread international condemnation, as did Hezbollah's use of rockets to hit back at civilian targets inside Israel. Despite heavy bombardment and many attempts to eliminate Nasrallah and Hezbollah's command structure, Israel was finally forced to call off its offensive after 34 days of fighting. Over 1 000 Lebanese, mainly civilians, were killed, along with 159 Israelis, most of them soldiers. Nasrallah claimed the result of the standoff to be a great victory for the Lebanese resistance, although it came at a very high cost in lives and destruction of property.

Hezbollah's main international backers are Syria and Iran, which provide the organization with funds and military equipment. Regarded as a terrorist

organization by many Western countries, the group remains a permanent fixture on the Lebanese political stage. It holds a number of seats in the national government and operates an extensive network of schools, hospitals, and other social services that are available to all Lebanese irrespective of their religious faith. And while it is a militantly pro-Islamic organization, it does not advocate transforming Lebanon from a multi-religious democracy into an Islamic republic along the lines of Iran.

**The "Cedar Revolution"**

In the aftermath of the dramatic assassination of Rafik Hariri on February 14, 2005, both pro- and anti-Syrian demonstrators took to the streets of Beirut and other Lebanese cities in the hundreds of thousands. Supporters of Hariri were convinced that Syria was behind his killing and loudly called for the resignation of the pro-Syrian Lebanese government of Prime Minister Omar Karami and the total and immediate withdrawal of all occupying Syrian forces from the country. Despite vehement denials from Damascus that it had played any role in Hariri's killing, Syrian president Bashar al-Assad announced that he would pull all of his country's troops out of Lebanon by the end of April 2005.

Huge crowds demonstrated in the place that came to be called "Martyrs Square," where Hariri had met his death, calling for reforms in Lebanon's political structure. Foreign journalists quickly nicknamed these events the "Cedar Revolution," after Lebanon's national symbol, the cedar tree. But Lebanese supporters of the movement preferred to call it the "independence *intifada*," or uprising. And while the reform movement enjoyed widespread support among Christian, Druze, and Sunni Muslim Lebanese, the pro-Hezbollah

and pro-Syrian masses of predominantly Shi'ite Muslims that also demonstrated in the weeks following Hariri's killing were at least as large, or possibly even larger in number.

This was a strong reminder to Lebanon's political leaders that Hezbollah was a force to be reckoned with. In the elections of June 2009, the pro-Hariri "March 14" coalition of parties, headed by his son Saad, won

71 of the 128 seats in the Lebanese parliament, with the other 57 going to the rival "March 8" faction dominated by Hezbollah. Each group took its name from the date of its largest and most successful rally following the murder of Rafik Hariri four years earlier. Humbled by the results, Saad Hariri regarded his bloc's victory as a posthumous tribute to his murdered father.

### **Follow-up**

1. With a partner, compare the information in your summary chart. Help each other to complete any missing information.
2. How successful was Lebanon in staying out of the conflicts between Israel and its Arab neighbours in the Middle East during the first decades after independence?
3. What were the main causes of the civil war in Lebanon? How did foreign intervention by Israel and Syria make the situation even worse?
4. Why did Hezbollah's successful military resistance to Israel increase its support in the Middle East while branding it a "terrorist organization" as far as Western countries are concerned?
5. How did the "Cedar Revolution" following the assassination of Rafik Hariri reveal the deep political and religious divisions inside Lebanon?
6. Read the quote by Robert Fisk at the beginning of this section. Explain what you think it means in your own words. Indicate whether or not you agree with it, and why.

# THE ASSASSINATION OF RAFIK HARIRI

## *Uncovering the Truth*

### Further Research

Read more about Neil Macdonald's riveting documentary in "CBC investigation: Who killed Lebanon's Rafik Hariri?" at [www.cbc.ca/world/story/2010/11/19/f-rfa-macdonald-lebanon-hariri.html](http://www.cbc.ca/world/story/2010/11/19/f-rfa-macdonald-lebanon-hariri.html).

### Focus for Reading

As you read this section, remember that for a person or group to be presumed guilty of committing a crime, it must be shown that the party had a) the ability, b) the opportunity, and c) a motive for committing it. On the basis of the information provided in this section, based on the CBC investigative documentary into the assassination of Rafik Hariri, decide whether you think a solid case has been made to implicate Hezbollah in the Lebanese politician's killing.

### Uncovering the Truth

As of early 2011, with the sixth anniversary of Rafik Hariri's assassination approaching, a final resolution to the murder still appeared far away. But after Neil MacDonald's CBC investigative documentary *Getting Away with Murder* revealed dramatic evidence linking Hezbollah to the crime, pressure mounted both inside Lebanon and in international circles for the murderers to be brought to justice. The United Nations' Special Tribunal for Lebanon finally arrived at a decision on the matter. On January 17, 2011, Daniel Bellemare, the tribunal's Canadian chief prosecutor, announced that an indictment and supporting materials had been submitted to its headquarters in The Hague, Netherlands. It would now be up to the pre-trial judge, Daniel Fransen, to review the indictments and determine whether any arrest warrants based on the evidence should be issued. There was absolutely no indication as to what individuals or groups were named in the indictments, and it was unlikely that the tribunal would provide such information any time soon.

But even before the announcement that the indictments had been filed, it was clear to many observers that Hezbollah and its leader, Sheik Hassan Nasrallah, were likely to be implicated in Hariri's assassination. The CBC documentary had meticulously prepared a devastating case against the Lebanese Shi'ite Muslim group, largely based on the efforts of

Captain Wissam Eid of the Lebanese intelligence service. Eid had pored over a number of cell-phone calls placed in Lebanon around the time of Hariri's murder and had been able to identify three different colour-coded networks of phones that could be linked to the crime. As a result of his detailed and time-consuming research, Eid was able to trace the phones to Beirut's Great Prophet Hospital, known to be a major Hezbollah command centre.

Eid's evidence report was submitted to the UN tribunal that had been named to investigate Hariri's assassination in 2005, but it was mysteriously lost and did not surface until shortly before Eid was killed in a car bomb in January 2008. By this time, according to the CBC documentary, some officials inside the tribunal were beginning to suspect that Colonel Wissam al Hassan, the head of Lebanese intelligence, may have been responsible for arranging Eid's death. This was because al Hassan had been unaccountably absent from Hariri's motorcade on the day of the blast, which was extremely suspicious given his position as head of the country's intelligence system. Al Hassan's alibi, that he was writing a university examination on that fateful day and had explained the reason for his absence to Hariri in advance, appeared highly dubious given the phone records that Eid had uncovered. The documentary hints at the possibility that al Hassan may have

been working behind the scenes with Hezbollah against Hariri and the tribunal whose task it was to uncover the truth about his assassination.

Ever since the tribunal was created, the commissioners heading it have been extremely reluctant to delve too deeply into evidence such as that provided by the CBC. Invariably the justification for their hesitation, bordering on inaction, was that any quick rush to judgment in the case that implicated Hezbollah might have profound and disastrous consequences for Lebanon's precarious political situation and might even plunge the country into a new civil war. Amid the controversy arising from the documentary and the indictments the tribunal finally issued in early January, Hezbollah withdrew its ministers from the Lebanese cabinet in protest, causing the resignation of the coalition government headed by Prime Minister Saad Hariri.

Nasrallah firmly denied that his group had any link to the assassination, instead pointing to Israel as the likely culprit. This was an astute political move in the Middle East, where Israel is generally viewed quite negatively, especially since it has targeted for assassination Palestinian leaders and others it regards as a threat to its security in the past. By late January 2011, it was beginning to appear that Hezbollah's gambit might have paid off and that it would emerge as the most significant political force in the new Lebanese government.

The CBC documentary found no evidence linking Israel to the killing of Hariri and dismissed Nasrallah's claims as baseless and merely an attempt to deflect blame from Hezbollah itself. But there are some who take these accusations seriously. For example, Jurgen Kulbel, a German criminal investigator, in his book *The Murder of Hariri*, alleges that the Israeli intelligence agency Mossad and the

U.S.'s C.I.A. were jointly responsible for planning and orchestrating Hariri's killing. As evidence for this, Kulbel points to the fact that the sophisticated jamming device designed to neutralize remote-control bombs, which Hariri had installed in his vehicle, had been turned off just prior to the assassination. Since this device was developed and manufactured in Israel, only that country's secret service would have had the ability to disconnect it. Further, he suggests that both Israel and the United States might have had an ulterior motive in using Hariri's murder, and the outrage it would inevitably provoke in Lebanon, to discredit Syria and Hezbollah, topple the pro-Syrian government, and unite the various political factions inside Lebanon into a force powerful enough to destroy Hezbollah once and for all.

Despite such provocative hypotheses, the majority view among journalists and foreign policy experts familiar with the labyrinthine and murky world of Lebanese politics is that either Syria or Hezbollah, or possibly both in tandem, were ultimately responsible for Hariri's killing. But they are also very doubtful whether anyone will, in the end, be brought to account for this deed. For this reason, the assassination of Rafik Hariri may in fact be a case of the guilty party or parties "getting away with murder."

In the words of former U.S. Middle East envoy Scott Carpenter, quoted in the CBC documentary, "Sitting where I am right now . . . is Hezbollah going to get away with it? Yes. Fewer travesties will be greater, but I don't see where the international will is to take this on, and I certainly don't see, absent that international will, how the Lebanese people can take it on" ("CBC investigation: Who killed Lebanon's Rafik Hariri?" at [cbc.ca](http://cbc.ca)). Only time will tell whether Carpenter's bleak assessment of the Hariri assassination will be proved correct.

## Follow-up

1. With a partner, compare your responses to those from the Focus for Reading. Do you think the case the CBC documentary has made linking Hezbollah to Hariri's killing is solid? Why or why not?
2. Why was implicating Israel in Hariri's assassination an intelligent move for Hezbollah leader Sheikh Nasrallah? Do you think there is any credible evidence to implicate Israel? Why or why not?
3. Do you agree with former U.S. Middle East envoy Scott Carpenter that it is highly unlikely that Hezbollah will ever be held to account for Hariri's killing? Why or why not?

