

Lebanon

Country name	Lebanon
State title	Lebanese Republic
Name of citizen	Lebanese
Official language	Arabic (ara)
Country name in Arabic script (PCGN Romanization)	لبنان (Lubnān)
State title in Arabic script (PCGN Romanization)	الجمهورية اللبنانية (Al Jumhūrīyah al Lubnānīyah)
Script	Arabic is written in Arabic script but toponyms should be taken from official Roman-script sources
Romanization System	Romanized forms as found on official publications (see below for further details)
ISO-3166 code (alpha-2/alpha-3)	LB/LBN
Capital (Conventional English name)	Beirut ¹
Capital (Local Roman-script name)	Beyrouth ¹
Capital in Arabic script (PCGN Romanization)	بيروت (Bayrūt)

Introduction

Lebanon is a mountainous country, located in the part of the Middle East known as the Levant (This area was formerly described as the Near East, but this term has largely fallen out of use). It lies on the Mediterranean Sea and has borders with Israel to the south and Syria to the north and east. The borders of contemporary Lebanon are a product of the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres. From 1516 until 1918 Lebanon was part of the Ottoman Empire. Following World War I it became part of the French Mandate for Syria and Lebanon (1920-1943). Lebanon became independent from France in 1943.

Lebanon is a country of minorities with no single dominant group. Demographics are controversial, and there has been no population census since 1932. Lebanon has a religiously diverse population: Muslim 61.1% (30.6% Sunni, 30.5% Shia, smaller percentages of Alawites and Ismailis), Christian 33.7% (Maronite Catholics are the largest Christian group), Druze 5.2%, very small numbers of Jews, Baha'is, Buddhists, and Hindus (CIA World Factbook 2018 estimate).

This small country, with an estimated population of 5,469,612 (July 2020 est.), hosts many refugees. These include an estimated 476,033 Palestinians, who arrived in 1948 after the creation of Israel.

¹ On cartographic products PCGN would recommend showing the local Roman-script name in primary position with the English conventional name in brackets; i.e. Beyrouth (Beirut). In English-language texts the conventional name alone can be used or the name can be shown the same way as on cartographic products, if desired. It is sometimes useful to reference both names at the first mention of a place.

The majority of Palestinians live in the 12 official UNRWA² refugee camps. In reality, these are now more like established towns, and many of their inhabitants were born and have lived their entire lives in the camps. More recently Lebanon has also become host to an estimated 879,529 Syrians and thousands of Iraqis, fleeing the wars in their home countries.³

It is notable that Lebanon is linguistically fairly homogenous, with most of the country's diverse population, including the large majority of the refugees, speaking Arabic as their first language.

Geographical names policy

Arabic is the official language of Lebanon. Official Lebanese mapping is produced in both Arabic script and French-style Roman script. The names found on these official Roman-script sources are the names recommended by PCGN for use on UK products. All diacritical marks on the Roman-script toponyms should be retained (see page 4 for further details).

Aside from mapping, many other things, such as road signs, other signage and websites are dual-language (Arabic and Roman-script - The latter is usually French but sometimes English). The French-style names are those that will usually be encountered in Roman script, which is why PCGN recommends use of these names on UK products. The French-style names are based on the French IGN⁴ romanization system for Arabic and differ from the way the same Arabic name would appear if romanized according to the [BGN/PCGN Romanization System for Arabic](#)⁵. They may contain both Arabic and French terms/words in addition to the specific name elements, e.g. Mohafazat Liban-Nord, Mohafazat Mont-Liban, Ras Beyrouth, Avenue Rafic Hariri.

While the spelling of place names in Arabic script in Lebanon is fairly consistent, there are often variations in the choice of spelling in Roman script and several spellings of a single name are likely to be encountered. To take one example, the Arabic definite article may be found spelt 'el' or 'al', or capitalised as 'Al' or 'El', and may be joined to the following word with a hyphen in some cases but not others, e.g. Nahr el Lîtâni versus Nahr El-Lîtâni or Nahr Al Lîtâni. PCGN advises following the spelling used on the most authoritative source, although this will mean, for example, treating the definite article differently in different names. The official products recommended by PCGN for use as names sources are produced by the Direction des Affaires Géographiques (Armée Libanaise). Although, even here, it should be noted that spellings may differ between one map series and another. The US [NGA GEONet Names Server \(GNS\)](#)⁶ is a good source for names over Lebanon. It has mostly been updated using the Carte du Liban 1:20,000-scale series, which is assessed to be the most reliable source. PCGN would recommend taking the names from the Carte du Liban 1:20,000 series or using the GNS. However, when using the GNS, care should be taken to avoid using names romanized using the BGN/PCGN Arabic romanization system, which may be found for some features

² United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

³ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/le.html>,
https://web.archive.org/web/20130117034013/https://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country%2C%2C%2CCOUNTR_YPROF%2CLBN%2C4562d8cf2%2C4954ce52c%2C0.html

⁴ Institut Géographique National, now renamed Institut national de l'information géographique et forestière (<http://www.ign.fr/>). Details of the IGN Romanization System can be found here: https://www.eki.ee/wgrs/rom1_ar.pdf

⁵ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/858000/ROMANIZATION_OF_ARABIC.pdf

⁶ US Board on Geographic Names GEONet Names Server: <http://earth-info.nga.mil/gns/html/index.html>

in the GNS. These can often be recognised by the use of non-French diacritical marks (see below). For further information or assistance please contact PCGN.

While PCGN would not recommend the creation of unnecessary competing Roman-script forms of names through application of the BGN/PCGN Romanization System for Arabic, in the absence of Roman-script sources for a name, a Romanization of the Arabic name may be used.

Some features have conventional English-language names, i.e. a standard spelling that is usually used in English. For places within Lebanon, on cartographic products PCGN would recommend showing the local Roman-script name in primary position with the English conventional name in brackets, e.g. Beyrouth (Beirut). In English-language texts the conventional name alone can be used or the name can be shown the same way as on cartographic products, if desired. It is sometimes useful to reference both names at the first mention of a place. For transnational features, such as rivers that flow through more than one country, or international features, outside the sovereignty of any one country, PCGN recommends use of the conventional name for the feature. The conventional name is also recommended for disputed areas such as Shebaa Farms (see below).

PCGN would recommend labelling refugee camps in Lebanon in a similar way, i.e. the local Lebanese Roman-script spelling in primary position and any conventional spelling in brackets. The conventional names are usually considered to be the names used in English by the organisation operating the camp, e.g. UNRWA⁷.

Boundaries Issues

Lebanon's borders with Syria and Israel remain unresolved. Lacking a treaty or other documentation describing the boundary, portions of the Lebanon - Syria boundary are unclear with several sections in dispute:

1. **Shebaa Farms** is a strip of land at the intersection of the Lebanon - Syria boundary, at the northern limit of Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, measuring approximately 10 km by 2 km. In the first instance this dispute is between Lebanon and Syria. However, Israel is implicated in the dispute as it considers the Shebaa Farms area to be part of Golan Heights⁸, which is disputed between Israel and Syria. On UK products, the Shebaa Farms area is to be shown as being inclusive to Syrian territory currently occupied by Israel in the wider Golan Heights territory. A *de jure* boundary should be shown for the Lebanon - Syria boundary. The conventional name Shebaa Farms should be used.
2. Five villages (and their surrounding territories) are disputed between Syria and Lebanon. These are Aarsâl (34° 10' 48" N 36° 25' 12" E), Deïr El Aachâyer (33° 33' 27" N, 36° 00' 39" E), Kfar Qoûq (33° 32' 00" N, 35° 53' 32" E), Qasr (34° 28' 52" N, 36° 26' 24" E) and Tfaïl (33° 51' 00" N, 36° 22' 05" E). This dispute is primarily caused by the lack of any complete demarcation along the boundary. The villages are generally considered as pertaining to Lebanon (and certainly are in the *de facto* sense) and should be shown as part of Lebanon on UK products.

⁷ <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/lebanon>

⁸ The UK government considers the Golan Heights to be part of Syria. Consequently, Syrian, Arabic-language names should be applied to features within this area. This differs from current US foreign policy, therefore the NGA GEONet Names Server (GNS) cannot be used as a names source for this area. PCGN recommends use of the Arabic or the conventional names for this area: Murtafa'ât al Jawlân (Golan Heights).

Language

Article 11 of the Lebanese constitution states: “The Arabic language is the official national language. The conditions under which the French language is to be used are determined by law.”⁹ The official language, Arabic, is the most common language spoken by the citizens of Lebanon. It is a Semitic language, written from right to left in the Arabic alphabet. Many people also speak French. The use of French is a legacy of Lebanon’s colonial history (see Introduction). It is often used as a prestige language for business, diplomacy and education.

Written Arabic differs from the spoken language. In Lebanon, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is used for official written purposes (often alongside French). The dialect spoken is Lebanese Arabic. As a variety of Levantine Arabic, Lebanese Arabic is most closely related to Syrian Arabic and shares many innovations with Palestinian and Jordanian Arabic. A majority of the Lebanese people are bilingual or trilingual and it is not uncommon for Lebanese people to code-switch between, or mix Lebanese Arabic, English, and French in their daily speech. English is increasingly used in science and business interactions.

Lebanese citizens of Armenian, Greek, or Assyrian descent often speak their ancestral languages with varying degrees of fluency. Armenians constitute approximately 4% of the population¹⁰.

Place names of Aramaic origin may be encountered in Lebanon. These often contain initial consonant clusters, such as those consisting of b plus another consonant such as l or h. The clusters bl, bh, etc., should be retained where they occur in a Lebanese Roman-script source. Some examples include: Blida (33° 08' 24" N, 035° 30' 53" E), Bsous (33° 48' 58" N, 035° 34' 42" E) and Bnâbîl (33° 53' 59" N, 035° 44' 16" E).

Inventory of characters (and their Unicode¹¹ encodings)¹²:

French contains the following letter-diacritic combinations in addition to the unmodified letters of the basic Roman script. These may be encountered in Lebanese Roman-script spellings of geographical names:

Upper-case character	Unicode encoding	Lower-case character	Unicode encoding
À	00C0	à	00E0
Â	00C2	â	00E2
Ç	00C7	ç	00E7
È	00C8	è	00E8
É	00C9	é	00E9
Ê	00CA	ê	00EA

⁹ https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Lebanon_2004.pdf?lang=en

¹⁰ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/le.html>

¹¹ See www.unicode.org

¹² Characters can be manually input into Microsoft Word documents by typing in these character codes and then holding down the ALT key and pressing /x/. The code will change to the required character. The letter can be copied and pasted into other programmes if required. Alternatively, the ‘Insert – Symbol’ command can be used; the code can be entered into the ‘Character code’ box which will show the corresponding letter.

A GeoNames Soft-Copy Keyboard can be downloaded from the NGA website and used to enter the required letter-diacritic combinations for a particular region: http://geonames.nga.mil/gns/html/gns_services.html.

Upper-case character	Unicode encoding	Lower-case character	Unicode encoding
Ë	00CB	ë	00EB
Î	00CE	î	00EE
Ï	00CF	ï	00EF
Ô	00D4	ô	00F4
Œ	0152	œ	0153
Ù	00D9	ù	00F9
Û	00DB	û	00FB
Ü	00DC	ü	00FC
ÿ *	0178	ÿ *	00FF

* rarely encountered

The **BGN/PCGN Romanization System for Arabic** contains the following letter-diacritic combinations in addition to the unmodified letters of the basic Roman script:

Upper-case character	Unicode encoding	Lower-case character	Unicode encoding
‘	2018 or 02BB	’	2019 or 02BC
Á	00C1	á	00E1
Ā	0100	ā	0101
Ḍ	1E10	ḍ	1E11
Ḥ	1E28	ḥ	1E29
Ī	012A	ī	012B
Ş	015E	ş	015F
Ṭ	0162	ṭ	0163
Ū	016A	ū	016B
Ẓ	005A+0327*	ẓ	007A+0327*

*Note, the z + cedilla is not available as a single encoding.

Administrative structure

Lebanon is currently divided into eight first-order administrative divisions (ADM1), known as governorates or provinces (*mohafazat* in Arabic). These are sub-divided into *cazas* (districts) at second-order (ADM2) level, which are further sub-divided into municipalities (Arabic: *baladia*; French: *municipalité*) at ADM3 level.

Law 522/2003 set the ground to create two new *mohafazats*, namely Baalbek-Hermel and Aakkâr. Nevertheless, various public administrations (including the Lebanese Central Administration of

Statistics) still adopt the six *mohafazats* division.¹³ PCGN recommends showing all eight mohafazats. These are listed below.

1. Aakkâr (33° 40' 00" N 35° 50' 00" E)

Name in Arabic Script	عكار
Long form name	Mohafazat Aakkâr
Long form name in Arabic Script	محافظة عكار
Variant Name(s)	Muḥāfazat 'Akār, 'Akār, Aakar, 'Akkār
ISO 3166-2 subdivision code	LB-AK
Centre	Halba (34° 32' 34" N 36° 04' 47" E)
Centre in Arabic Script	حلبا
Variant Name(s) of Centre	Aakar, 'Akkār, Ḥalbā, Halbe
Consists of 1 ADM2	Aakkâr

2. Baalbek-Hermel (33° 12' 30" N 36° 18' 00" E)

Name in Arabic Script	بعلبك - الهرمل
Long form name	Mohafazat Baalbek-Hermel
Long form name in Arabic Script	محافظة بعلبك - الهرمل
Variant Name(s)	Muḥāfazat Ba'albak-Al Hirmil, Ba'albak-Al Hirmil
ISO 3166-2 subdivision code	LB-BH
Centre	Baalbek (34° 00' 21" N 36° 13' 05" E)
Centre in Arabic Script	بعلبك
Variant Name(s) of Centre	Héliopolis, Ba'albak, Baalbeck, Ba'labak, Ba'labakk, بعلبك
Consists of 2 ADM2s	Baalbek, Hermel

3. Béqaa (33° 40' 00" N 35° 50' 00" E)

Name in Arabic Script	البقاع
Long form name	Mohafazat Béqaa
Long form name in Arabic Script	محافظة البقاع
Variant Name(s)	Beqaa, Bekaa, Muḥāfazat al Biqā', El-Beqaa, La Beqâa
ISO 3166-2 subdivision code	LB-BI
Centre	Zahlé (33° 50' 59" N 35° 54' 15" E)
Centre in Arabic Script	زحلة
Variant Name(s) of Centre	Zaḥlah
Consists of 3 ADM2s	La Béqaa-Ouest (West Bekaa), Râchaïya, Zahlé (Zahleh)

4. Beyrouth (33° 53' 00" N 35° 30' 00" E)

Name in Arabic Script	بيروت
Long form name	Mohafazat Beyrouth
Long form name in Native Script	محافظة بيروت
Variant Name(s)	Beirut, Muḥāfazat Bayrūt, Bayrūt
ISO 3166-2 subdivision code	LB-BA
Centre	Beyrouth (Beirut) (33° 52' 19" N 35° 30' 35" E)
Centre in Native Script	بيروت
Variant Name(s) of Centre	Bayrūt, Beirōt
Not sub-divided into smaller administrative divisions	

¹³ <http://www.cas.gov.lb/index.php/about-lebanon-en>

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5. Liban-Nord (34° 20' 00" N 35° 55' 00" E)

Name in Arabic Script	لبنان الشمالي
Long form name	Mohafazat Liban-Nord
Long form name in Native Script	محافظة لبنان الشمالي
Variant Name(s)	Mohafazat ech Chimâl, Muḥāfazat Lubnān ash Shamālī, Muḥāfazat ash Shamāl, North Lebanon, Lubnān ash Shamālī
ISO 3166-2 subdivision code	LB-AS
Centre	Trâblous (Tripoli) (34° 26' 12" N 35° 50' 59" E)
Centre in Arabic Script	طرابلس
Variant Name(s) of Centre	Ṭarābulus
Consists of 6 ADM2s	Batroûn, Bcharré (Bécharré), Koura, Miniyé-Danniyé (Miniyeh-Danniyeh), Trâblous (Tripoli), Zgharta

6. Liban-Sud (33° 25' 00" N 35° 20' 00" E)

Name in Arabic Script	لبنان الجنوبي
Long form name	Mohafazat Liban-Sud
Long form name in Arabic Script	محافظة لبنان الجنوبي
Variant Name(s)	Aj Jeanoub, Mohafazat ej Jnoub, Muḥāfazat Lubnān al Janūbī, South Lebanon, Lubnān al Janūbī, Lubnan al Jonoubi
ISO 3166-2 subdivision code	LB-JA
Centre	Saïda (Sidon) (33° 33' 47" N 35° 22' 08" E)
Centre in Arabic Script	صيدا
Variant Name(s) of Centre	Şaydā, Şaydūn, Saaïdé, Saïda
Consists of 3 ADM2s	Jezzîne, Saïda (Sidon), Soûr (Tyre)

7. Mont-Liban (33° 55' 00" N 35° 40' 00" E)

Name in Arabic Script	جبل لبنان
Long form name	Mohafazat Mont-Liban
Long form name in Arabic Script	محافظة جبل لبنان
Variant Name(s)	Mohafazat Jabal Loubnane, Muḥāfazat Jabal Lubnān, Mount Lebanon, Jabal Lubnān
ISO 3166-2 subdivision code	LB-JL
Centre	Baabda (33° 50' 02" N 35° 32' 397" E)
Centre in Arabic Script	بعيدا
Variant Name(s) of Centre	B'abdā
Consists of 6 ADM2s	Aaley, Baabda, Chouf, Jbaïl (Byblos), Kesrouane, Matn

8. Nabatiyé (33° 15' 00" N 35° 30' 00" E)

Name in Arabic Script	النيطية
Long form name	Mohafazat Nabatiyé
Long form name in Arabic Script	محافظة النيطية
Variant Name(s)	Muḥāfazat an Nabaṭīyah, An Nabaṭīyah
ISO 3166-2 subdivision code	LB-NA
Centre	Nabatiyé (33° 22' 43" N 35° 28' 59" E)
Centre in Arabic Script	النيطية
Variant Name(s) of Centre	An Nabaṭīyah, En Nabaṭīye, Nabatiyah, Nabatiyeh
Consists of 4 ADM2s	Bent Jbaïl, Hâsbaïya, Marjajoûn, Nabatiyé

Other Significant Locations

PCGN Recommended Name ¹⁴	Name in Arabic Script (BGN/PCGN Romanization) ¹⁵	Conventional Name	Variant Names/Spellings	Location	Feature Type
Nahr el Aassi [LB] Nahr al 'Āṣī [SY] Asi Nehri [TR]	نهر العاصي (Nahr al 'Āṣī)	Orontes	Nehir Oronte; Nahr el Assi; Nahr al 'Āṣ; Nahr el Aâssi; El Asi	36° 02' 52" N, 035° 58' 01" E	river
Nahr Beyrouth	نهر بيروت (Nahr Bayrūt)		Nahr Bayrut; Nahr Beirut; Beirut River	33° 54' 10" N, 035° 32' 27" E	river
Nahr el Kalb	نهر الكلب (Nahr al Kalb)		El Kelb River; Nahr Al Kalb; Nahr al-Kalb; Dog River	33° 57' 23" N, 035° 35' 53" E	river
Nahr el Lītāni	نهر الليطاني (Nahr al Lītānī)		Nahr el Litani; Leontes; Litany	33° 20' 00" N, 035° 14' 36" E	river
Nahr el Jaouz	نهر الجوز (Nahr al Jawz)		Nahr Jaouz; Nahr el Djouz; Nahr Jaouze; Nahr al Jawzah	34° 16' 03" N, 035° 39' 28" E	river
Bekaa Valley ¹⁶	وادي البقاع (Wādī al Biqā')	Bekaa Valley	La Beqâa; Al Biqā'; Al Biquā; El Bika; El Beqā'; Beqaa; Biqâ; Becaa	33° 50' 00" N, 036° 00' 00" E	valley
Mont Liban	جبل لبنان (Jabal Lubnān)	Mount Lebanon Range	Jebel el Gharbi; Lebanon Mountains; Mont Liban	34° 00' 03" N, 035° 59' 57" E	mountain range
Jabal ech Charqi [LB] Jibāl Lubnān ash Sharqīyah [SY]	جبال لبنان الشرقية (Jibāl Lubnān ash Sharqīyah)	Anti-Lebanon Range	Anti-Liban; Al Jabal ash Sharqi; Jebel Esh Sharki; Antilibanos; Eastern Mountain	34° 00' 00" N, 036° 30' 00" E	mountain range
Aïn el Hiloué	مخيم عين الحلوة (Mukhayyam 'Ayn al Hulwah)	Ein El Hilweh	Ain al Hilwi; Ein el-Hilweh	33° 32' 30" N, 035° 22' 40" E	refugee camp
Nahr el Bâred	مخيم نهر البارد (Mukhayyam Nahr al Bārid)	Nahr el-Bared	Nahr El Barid	34° 30' 48" N, 035° 57' 35" E	refugee camp

¹⁴ See Geographical names policy, above, for more detail on when and where the use of the different name forms listed is recommended.

¹⁵ The names in this column are provided for information only.

¹⁶ There are many variant spellings used for this area. PCGN recommends using the conventional name across UK government products for consistency. Where it is considered helpful reference to alternative spellings may be included. The spelling Béquaa is however recommended for the administrative divisions.

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Shatila	مخيم شاتيلا (Mukhayyam Shātīlā)		Chatila	33° 52' 00" N, 035° 30' 00" E	refugee camp
Shebaa Farms	مزارع شبعا (Mazāri' Shib'ā)	Shebaa Farms	Chebaa; Sheba'a Farms; Shabaa; Shibaa Hebrew: חוות שבעא, <i>Havot Sheba'a</i> or הר דוב, <i>Har Dov</i>	33° 17' 00" N, 035° 42' 00" E	Disputed area (Show on UK products as Syrian territory – see page 3 for details)
Murtafa'āt al Jawlān (Golan Heights)	مرتفعات الجولان Murtafa'āt al Jawlān	Golan Heights	Jaoulane; Jaulan; Djaulān; El Jaulān; Al Jawlān; الجولان Hebrew: Ramat HaGolan, רמת הגולן	32° 54' 17" N, 035° 48' 26" E	Disputed area (HMG view as part of Syria – not US view- see page 3 for details)

Useful references

- Administrative divisions: <http://www.statoids.com>
- BBC Country Profile: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-14647308>
- BGN/PCGN Romanization System for Arabic:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/858000/ROMANIZATION_OF_ARABIC.pdf
- CIA World Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/le.html>
- International Organization for Standardization (ISO): www.iso.org
- ISO Online Browsing Platform (OBP): <https://www.iso.org/obp/ui>
- Languages: www.ethnologue.com , www.omniglot.com
- Lebanese Central Administration of Statistics (CAS): <http://www.cas.gov.lb/>
- Lebanese Directorate of Geographic Affairs (D.A.G.):
<https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/fr/content/la-direction-des-affaires-g%C3%A9ographiques>
- Local Liban (Resources on local development in Lebanon): <http://www.localiban.org/english>
- Republic of Lebanon Government Portal for Information and Forms:
http://www.informs.gov.lb/informs_en/Pages/Home.aspx
- UN Working Group on Romanization Systems, Arabic Romanization:
https://www.eki.ee/wgrs/rom1_ar.pdf
- Unicode: www.unicode.org
- UNRWA: <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/lebanon> (for details of UN-administered Palestinian refugee camps)
- US Board on Geographic Names GEOnet Names Server: <http://earth-info.nga.mil/gns/html/index.html>
- US Library of Congress Country Study: <https://www.loc.gov/item/88600488/>

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