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International Outlook for Privately Protected Areas

Country Profile: LEBANON

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Introduction

This country profile is part of a study by the International Land Conservation Network (ILCN) and United Nations Development Program (UNDP) summarizing the **legal, policy, and institutional mechanisms used to establish and incentivize privately protected areas (PPAs) in 30 understudied countries.**

PPAs contribute to the achievement of global conservation goals and biodiversity targets by contributing to landscape-scale conservation, connectivity and ecological-representativeness of protected areas.

For the purposes of this profile, an area is considered a PPA if it conforms to the definition agreed upon by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Generally speaking, a PPA's protection must be recognized and durable (with long term conservation intent); it must be governed by a private or non-governmental entity; and it must be governed and managed to meet the general conservation standards of a protected area (PA) as laid out by the IUCN.^{1,2} **Note: Alongside currently existing mechanisms in these countries, this study also references mechanisms that represent *potential opportunities for the creation of PPAs.***

The data in this profile is based on a 2018 desk review of law and policy documents, government reports, publications by multi-lateral organizations, scholarly literature, and other sources. For 28 of the 30 country profiles, data was reviewed by a volunteer in-country expert. We are grateful to these experts, whose names and the profiles they reviewed are listed in the appendix to the [International Outlook for Privately Protected Areas summary report](#).

Finally, this profile is intended to be a living document, which will be updated periodically as more information is submitted and time and resources allow. If you have a contribution, please contact the authors at landconservation@lincolninst.edu.

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¹ Mitchell, B.A., Stolton, S., Bezaury-Creel, J., Bingham, H.C., Cumming, T.L., Dudley, N., Fitzsimons, J.A., Malleret-King, D., Redford, K.H. and Solano, P. (2018). *Guidelines for privately protected areas*. Best Practice Protected Area Guidelines Series No. 29. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. xii + 100pp.

² Dudley, N. (ed.) (2008). *Guidelines for Applying Protected Area Management Categories*. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. x + 86pp. WITH Stolton, S., Shadie, P. and Dudley, N. (2013). *IUCN WCPA Best Practice Guidance on Recognising Protected Areas and Assigning Management Categories and Governance Types*, Best Practice Protected Area Guidelines Series No. 21. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN

LEBANON

Outlook for Privately-Protected Areas

The ILCN and UNDP would like to thank the following volunteers for reviewing this document for accuracy to the best of their ability.

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I. Country Overview

Land Area and Land Use

Lebanon's total land area is 1,045,000 hectares (ha). Of this, 658,000 ha (63 per cent) is in agricultural use and 137,220 ha (13 per cent) is forested.³ Lebanon is divided into eight *cazas*, or districts, with their own administrations under the federal government.

Much of the terrain is mountainous, including the range known as Mount Lebanon and several others that extend the length of the country from north to south. Many of the remaining forests are in the mountains. Some of these forests include the flagship species Lebanon cedar (*Cedrus libani*), which is listed as vulnerable on the IUCN red list. Lebanon has a Mediterranean climate, with mild temperatures, dry summers, and wet winters.

Land Tenure and Ownership

The basis of land law in Lebanon lies in the *Land Property Code*, enacted by the *Decree 3339* of November 12, 1939.⁴ This Law replaced a system known as the Medjelle—a mix of French civil code, Islamic Shari'a, and regional customary legal approaches—with a more straightforward civil code approach, based on the French model. In addition, the Ottoman Land Code of 1858 still regulates land administration and tenure, and the government claimed ownership over rangelands and granted use rights to local communities through legislation in 1971.

Private ownership is the norm for both residential and agricultural land.⁵ Land ownership is conferred by a deed, which is registered with the national Real Estate Register.⁶ Private ownership confers a wide range of rights in these contexts, as there are no strong legal restrictions on land use in privately-held areas. In terms of land conservation, this presents something of a challenge, as zoning powers are limited when it

³ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. 2014. "Lebanon." Accessed January 2018. <http://www.fao.org/countryprofiles/index/en/?iso3=LBN>.

⁴ Darwish, Talal. 2012. "Country Study on Status of Land Tenure, Planning and Management in Oriental Near East Countries. Case of Lebanon." Food and Agricultural Organization of The United Nations. eds. Faycel Chenini and Moujahed Achouri (DRR-RNE, HMDT-SNO-FAO). <http://www.fao.org/3/a-as711e.pdf>.

⁵ Darwish, 2012.

⁶ Moghaizel, Fadi. ISSUES IN OWNERSHIP OF REAL ESTATE: Lebanon lexmundi.com/images/lexmundi/PracticeGroups/RealEstate/Survey2/Lebanon.pdf

comes to enforcing environmental issues, given the lack of a rural land use code.⁷ Foreign land ownership is permitted, but landholdings over 0.3 ha require a permit, though no one foreign entity may hold more than 3 per cent of a given *cazas'* land area.⁸ There are no constraints on how a foreign landowner may use their land.

Forest ownership is distributed among municipal lands (*macha'a*), state forest lands (*amiri*, some of which are protected forests), and privately-owned lands (*mulk*), which include lands controlled by religious institutions (*waqf*).⁹ Approximately 65 per cent of the forests are owned by public entities (state and communal lands) and 35 per cent are privately owned (private and religious properties) Some 60 per cent of Lebanon's forests are privately owned.¹⁰

Protected Areas in Lebanon

Lebanon has a robust protected area network, dating back to the 1930s. Major enabling legislation includes the *Law of Protection of Natural Sites* (08/07/1939), the *Forest Code* (Law 558, dated 24/07/1996) and the *Ministry of Agriculture Forest Code* (Law 85 from 1991).¹¹ Current protected areas in Lebanon fall into the following categories:

- *Nature reserves (mihmiyat)*, established by law in 1992, are protected by Resolution of the National Government and only apply to public land.¹² Nature Reserve Committees are established for nature reserves, under the guidance of the Ministry of Environment (MoE). There are currently 15 such protected areas, only six of which have management plans, covering about 2.7 per cent of Lebanon's territory.¹³
- *Natural Sites* are protected by a decision or decree of the Minister of Environment, based on the *Law of Protection of Natural Sites* (08/07/1939).¹⁴ This designation can be applied to both private and public lands. There are currently 18 such protected areas.
- *Protected forests* are declared by a decision of the Minister of Agriculture, based on the *Law of Protection of Forest Wealth and Forests* (Law 85 dated 1991) and the *Law of Protection of Forests* (Law 558, dated 24/07/1996).¹⁵ As of 2006, there were 12 such protected areas.¹⁶

In 2002, the MoE proposed a new categorization of protected areas, redefining their criteria and management objectives, through a Protected Areas Framework Law.¹⁷ The law was amended in 2006 and again in 2012. The latest amendments were approved as decree No. 8045 (dated 25/4/2012) by the Parliamentary Committee, but as of 2016, they were still awaiting final endorsement. The 2012

⁷ Darwish, 2012.

⁸ Moghaizel Law Office. n.d. Guide to Doing Business in Lebanon. <http://www.databank.com.lb/docs/Guideline%20to%20doing%20business%20in%20Lebanon.pdf>.

⁹ Darwish, 2012.

¹⁰ Ministry of the Environment Lebanon/UNEP/GEF. 2015. Fifth National Report of Lebanon to the Convention on Biological Diversity. P. 50. <https://www.cbd.int/doc/world/lb/lb-nr-05-en.pdf>.

¹¹ Darwish, 2012.

¹² Zantout, Rasha. 2014. "Fourteen Natural Reserves in Lebanon Form an Aesthetic, Cultural, and Touristic Wealth." *Lebanon National News Agency*, March 20, 2014. <http://nna-leb.gov.lb/en/show-report/410/Fourteen-natural-reserves-in-Lebanon-form-an-aesthetic-cultural-and-touristic-wealth>.

¹³ Ministry of the Environment Lebanon/UNEP/GEF, 2015. P. 18.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ministry of Environment Lebanon. 2006. "Protected Area Categories." Accessed February 2018. www.moe.gov.lb/ProtectedAreas/categories.htm.

¹⁷ Ministry of the Environment Lebanon/UNEP/GEF. 2016. National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan – NBSAP. <https://www.cbd.int/doc/world/lb/lb-nbsap-v2-en.pdf>. P. 19.

amendment includes four categories: *Natural Site or Monument*; *Natural Park*; *Hima* (community management areas that are declared by a decision of the Minister of Agriculture and are under municipal oversight); and *Nature reserve*.¹⁸

According to the World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA), protected areas cover 2.6 per cent (268,000 ha) of Lebanon's total land area.¹⁹ (Note: The categories and coverage of protected areas in the WDPA are inconsistent with the recognized categories noted in Lebanon's NBSAP. Differences between statistics may be due to differences in methodologies or out of date reporting.)

II. Law and Policy for Private Land Conservation

Privately Protected Areas

Privately protected areas (PPAs) in Lebanon have not been defined in legislation. The 2005 Stable Institutional Structure for Protected Areas Management (SISPAM) Project, which led to creation of the National Action Plan for Protected Areas (NAPPA), noted that the SISPAM project was working on developing "mutual contractual agreements and promoting incentive instruments between the MoE and the landowners to set the frame for protected area management on private properties."²⁰ The 2012 Protected Areas Framework amendment should make it possible to work with the private sector on managing future natural parks;²¹ however, such tools have not yet been formally adopted.

Despite this, PPAs have already been implemented in many parts of the country, with a variety of management systems. In these cases, the areas are not registered as PPAs within the WDPA, but are referred to by their international designation (ex. Jabal Moussa UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and Aammiq Ramsar site, Wetland of International Importance).²² There is, therefore, a need to systematically address the issue of private protected area registration and governance in Lebanon.

Lease for Conservation of Natural Sites

Lebanon's most well-known and autonomous PPA is the recently established Jabal Moussa Biosphere Reserve and Natural Site (see case study). This 6,500 ha site is managed by a not-for-profit non-governmental organization: the Association for the Protection of Jabal Moussa (APJM).^{23,24} A significant part of the core area is Church property (*waqf*) and was designated a Natural Site by the Ministry of Environment in 2012 (natural sites can be designated regardless of land ownership). APJM negotiated and funded a 10-year lease contract with the religious endowments to rent large swaths this area. Another part of the core area is municipal property (*macha'a*) was also leased and was subsequently designated a Protected Forest by the Ministry of Agriculture in 2008.^{25,26}

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ UNEP-WCMC. 2017. "Protected Area Profile for Lebanon from the World Database of Protected Areas". Accessed June 2017. <https://www.protectedplanet.net/country/LBN>.

²⁰ Ministry of Environment Lebanon and EC-LIFE Third Countries Programme. 2005. Protected Areas in Lebanon: An integrated strategy for sustainable management. Stable Institutional Structure for Protected Areas Management Project. P. 29. <http://www.moe.gov.lb/Protectedareas/publications/ManagementStructureForNatureReserveInLebanon.pdf>.

²¹ Ministry of the Environment Lebanon/UNEP/GEF, 2015. P. 19.

²² Association for the Protection of Jabal Moussa, personal communication, July 16, 2018.

²³ Association for the Protection of Jabal Moussa (APJM). 2018. "The Reserve" Accessed January 2018. <https://www.jabalmoussa.org/reserve>.

²⁴ Association for the Protection of Jabal Moussa, personal communication, July 16, 2018.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

To the knowledge of this study, this is the first example of leasing land for conservation in Lebanon.²⁷ According to the *Guidelines for Privately Protected Areas* (2018), released by the IUCN, “PPAs can be established on leased land, provided these are intended to be long-term and renewable.”²⁸ Therefore, depending on the terms of the contract, it is possible that leases in Lebanon may one day be recognized as PPAs. The case study of Jabal Moussa Biosphere Reserve is highlighted in the IUCN best practices document, indicating that when combined with sustainable development, public awareness, and community relationships, this could be a model for other areas in Lebanon.

Voluntary Conservation

One of the first PPAs in Lebanon was the privately-owned Aammiq Wetland, which has received several international designations (Ramsar Site, Wetland of International Importance, Global Important Bird Area). The Aammiq wetland is on private property and, thus, not formally designed a protected area. However, the landowners have chosen to conserve the land, and it is currently managed by the Shouf Biosphere Reserve team as part of the reserve’s biosphere (see case study below).^{29,30}

Church Forests

Finally, another interesting example of a potential PPA is the Harissa Forest, a 400-ha property controlled by the Maronite Church, which was declared the world’s first Maronite Protected Area in 2000. As a Mediterranean forest with high biodiversity, this area was identified as a site in need of protection by Ministry of Environment.³¹

Servitudes

Real estate servitudes are permitted by *Land Property Code* enacted by *Decree 3339* of 12 November 1939.³² Servitudes are used in many other countries to restrict development on private lands, akin to the common law concept of the conservation easement. As known to this study, servitudes have not been mobilized as a tool for private land conservation in Lebanon.

National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP)

Lebanon’s most recent National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP, 2016), submitted to the Convention on Biological Diversity, does not address PPAs directly but calls for an increased role of the private sector in biodiversity conservation. For example, National Action 8.1 of the NBSAP calls on the Ministry of Environment and associated agencies to “create incentives and establish a legislative framework for the private sector’s engagement in biodiversity actions.”³³

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Mitchell, B.A., S. Stolton, J. Bezaury-Creel, H.C. Bingham, T.L. Cumming, N. Dudley, J.A. Fitzsimons, D. Malleret-King, K.H. Redford, and P. Solano. 2018. *Guidelines for privately protected areas*. Best Practice Protected Area Guidelines Series No. 29. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. xii + 100pp.

²⁹ Ministry of Environment Lebanon and EC-LIFE Third Countries Programme, 2005. P. 18.

³⁰ Association for the Protection of Jabal Moussa, personal communication, July 16, 2018.

³¹ Picow, Maurice. 2009. "Lebanon's Harissa Forest Saved from Destruction by Maronite Church." *The Green Prophet*, November 16, 2019. <https://www.greenprophet.com/2009/11/lebanon-church-forest/>.

³² Darwish, 2012.

³³ Ministry of the Environment Lebanon/UNEP/GEF, 2016. P. 45

III. Financial Incentives for Privately Protected Areas

There are, as known to this study, no tax incentives to encourage landowners to donate or manage land for conservation purposes. However, as noted in the NBSAP, new and potential funding sources could include public-private partnerships and corporate social responsibility activities.³⁴

Several large conservation finance instruments have been used to support activities in Lebanon. For example, the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) has financed national, local, and regional projects in Lebanon, often working with SPNL,³⁵ and the Global Environment Facility has financed 20 national and 20 regional projects in Lebanon through grants.³⁶

Ecotourism

Ecotourism has been used as a source of funding by the Aammiq Wetlands and Jabal Moussa PPAs (see case studies) and in conservation areas in Al Jord. Al Jord, for example, is a private-community partnership with eco-tourism located in the mountains of Hermel, Akkar, and Donniyeh of North Lebanon. It is owned by private investors (63 per cent), local partners (25 per cent) and an NGO 108 (12 per cent),³⁷ and attempts to balance sustainable development and biodiversity conservation but has not sought official protected area status for the land.³⁸

IV. Organizations

Governmental

- All protected areas fall under the mandate of the Ministry of Environment, which supports the activities of the protected area Appointed Protected Area Committee (APAC). It is also the body to which all nature reserve committees report. This Ministry collects data on the national PA network and is the point ministry for most international organizations dealing with conservation in Lebanon.³⁹
- The Ministry of Agriculture oversees and designates protected forests.⁴⁰

Non-governmental

- A Rocha Lebanon has worked in the country since 1996, helping landowners and communities to improve their conservation practices, particularly in the Aammiq Wetlands.⁴¹ A Rocha is a larger Christian nature conservation organization with 19 countries in its network.
- Al-Shouf Cedar Society is the managing body of the Al-Shouf Biosphere Reserve (declared 2005), Lebanon's largest nature reserve, encompassing the Aammiq Wetlands.⁴²

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund. n.d. "Lebanon." Accessed January 2018. <https://www.cepf.net/countries/lebanon>.

³⁶ Global Environment Facility. 2018. "Lebanon." Accessed online on February 2018 at <https://www.thegef.org/country/lebanon>

³⁷ Al Jord Project. n.d. "Ecotourism." Accessed January 2018. www.aljord.org/aljord_project/aljord/.

³⁸ Darwish, 2012. P.106.

³⁹ See their website: <http://www.moe.gov.lb/home.aspx>.

⁴⁰ See their website: <http://www.agriculture.gov.lb/english/Pages/Main.aspx>.

⁴¹ Assad Serhal, Bassima Khatib, Dalia Jawhary Tala Khatib, Nada Farah. "The involvement of Local Conservation Groups in IBA conservation in the Himas of Lebanon." Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon. BirdLife International. www.birdlife.org/sites/default/files/attachments/Review-of-LCGs.

⁴² See their website: <http://shoufcedar.org/>.

- The Association for Forests, Development and Conservation (AFDC) is focused on sustainable conservation of natural resources, awareness raising and capacities building that contribute to the national efforts for better environmental management.⁴³
- The Association for the Protection of Jabal Moussa is a non-governmental, not-for-profit organization created in 2007 for the conservation of biodiversity and preservation of the cultural heritage in Jabal Moussa Mountain and the surrounding village, balancing sustainable development aims with conservation.⁴⁴
- The Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL) is the BirdLife affiliate in Lebanon and one of the major conservation NGOs in the country. Initiated in 1983 and recognized in 1986, SPNL has been instrumental in reviving the *hima* system and other efforts to steward biodiversity in and around the country's protected areas.⁴⁵
- Tannourine Cedars Reserve has a highly-involved nature reserve committee, operating since 1999.⁴⁶

V. Case Studies

Aammig Wetlands

The Aammig wetlands represent an innovative conservation approach in Lebanon, bringing NGOs and local landowners into a more prominent conservation role. Just two hours from the capital city of Beirut, the 250 ha wetland is Lebanon's largest. Conservation activities in the wetlands are spearheaded by a partnership between two of Lebanon's major conservation NGOs: A Rocha Lebanon (an office of the larger A Rocha network) and the Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL).

The site has international designations, both as a UNESCO biosphere reserve (as part of the larger Al-Shouf Cedar Reserve; 2005) and as an Important Bird Area (IBA), as recognized by BirdLife International. However, formalization of the area as a PPA in the Lebanese protected area network has come slowly, with Ministry of Environment partnerships with landowners limited by the lack of a policy framework on PPAs and the lack of economic incentives to guide private and community stakeholders.⁴⁷

Nevertheless, working with landowners in the area, the NGOs have established management plans for at least two-thirds of the site, instituted grazing controls, and are enforcing a hunting ban.⁴⁸ A Rocha Lebanon has incorporated the site in educational programming for Lebanese schoolchildren. An eco-tourism project is also in the works for the area and is privately run by the LLC "Lebanese Adventure."⁴⁹

⁴³ See their website: <http://www.afdc.org.lb/>.

⁴⁴ See their website: www.jabalmoussa.org.

⁴⁵ See their website: www.spnl.org/.

⁴⁶ See their website: <http://arztannourine.org/tannourine/>.

⁴⁷ Bachir, M. 2005. Stable Institutional Structure for Protected Areas Management in Lebanon: towards a stable institutional management structure. Report prepared for the MoE. Lebanon.

⁴⁸ Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon. n.d. "Aammig Wetlands Project." Accessed January 2018. www.spnl.org/ibas-kbas/aammig-wetlands/

⁴⁹ Assad Serhal, Bassima Khatib, Dalia Jawhary Tala Khatib, Nada Farah. 2010. "The involvement of Local Conservation Groups in IBA conservation in the Himas of Lebanon." Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon. BirdLife International. http://www.birdlife.org/sites/default/files/attachments/Review-of-LCGs-in-LEBANON_Final.pdf.

*Jabal Moussa UNESCO Biosphere Reserve*⁵⁰

With the mythological Adonis River at its border, the pristine mountainous area known as Jabal Moussa in Mount-Lebanon was described in 1861 by French Historian Ernest Renan in his "Mission de Phénicie" as both the "wildest" and "most remarkable" region in Lebanon.⁵¹

Owned in large part by the Maronite (Roman Catholic) Patriarchate and several Church endowments, the area remained protected for centuries, witnessing a symbiotic relationship with neighboring villages in the areas of forestry, charcoaling and small-scale pastoral and agricultural activity.

However, toward the end of the 20th Century, pressure from expanding building activity, road construction and various forms of poaching (tree-cutting, quarrying, hunting) began to threaten this diverse animal and plant sanctuary.

In 2007, following an attempt to blast a road in the heart of the mountain, a group of nature lovers formed the not-for-profit 'Association for the Protection of Jabal Moussa' (APJM) to try to conserve this exceptional cultural and natural heritage. However, Lebanese legislation did not recognize Nature Reserves on private lands.

APJM negotiated and funded a 10-year lease contract with the religious endowments to rent large swaths of the mountain. Public municipal land (*macha'a*) was also leased and designated a "Protected Forest" by the Ministry of Agriculture in 2008. APJM then turned to various international denominations to convince the Lebanese Government of the importance of the site, which became a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in 2009, a Global Important Bird Area (acc. to BirdLife Intl. criteria) and a member of IUCN in the same year, and subsequently an Important Plant Area and Key Biodiversity Area. Following the international recognition of this exceptional site, an essential part of the core area of Jabal Moussa was designated as "Natural Site" by the Ministry of Environment in 2012.

Today, Jabal Moussa is a well-known local and regional ecotourism destination, offering numerous diverse hiking packages guided by local youths, bed-and-breakfast guesthouses operated by local inhabitants and a series of typical artisanal and food products made by local women in an APJM-funded central workshop/kitchen. These products are sold at reserve entrances and increasingly, in various outlets across Lebanon (most renowned specialties are honey and thyme). From less than a thousand visitors at inception, the reserve hosted 22,000 ecotourists in 2017. Socio-economic activities also include beekeeping and native-tree nurseries which contribute to the conservation effort.

Meanwhile, the conservation stance led to tangible conservation results: an increase in dense forest areas was observed along the years since the establishment of APJM.⁵²

Ten years into this endeavor, international archaeologists are documenting important remnants ranging from the Cananean Bronze Age (2500 years before Christ) to the Mameluk Middle Ages, botanists are studying an increasing number of endemic species and APJM is negotiating a 50-year renewable lease on

⁵⁰ This case study was provided by the Association for the Protection of Jabal Moussa. Personal communication, July 16, 2018.

It has since also been printed in Mitchell, B.A., S. Stolton, J. Bezaury-Creel, H.C. Bingham, T.L. Cumming, N. Dudley, J.A. Fitzsimons, D. Malleret-King, K.H. Redford, and P. Solano. 2018. Guidelines for privately protected areas. Best Practice Protected Area Guidelines Series No. 29. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. xii + 100pp.

⁵¹ See their website: www.jabalmoussa.org.

⁵² Poyatos, MÁN., MÁL. Gómez, MÁV. Martínez, RMN. Cerrillo, GP. Rodríguez. 2015. Vulnerability assessment to climate change impacts on *Quercus cerris* L. var. *pseudo-cerris* (Boiss.) Boiss., *Quercus calliprinos* Webb. And *Pinus brutia* Ten. Populations in Jabal Moussa Biosphere Reserve (Lebanon). Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and Plan Bleu pour l'Environnement et le Développement en Méditerranée. www.fao.org/3/a-i6339e.pdf

Church properties, while strengthening its ties with locals to give as many of them as possible a stake in long-term conservation.