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## Lebanon: Geneva Unity Talks Adjourn

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A week-long session of the Lebanese national reconciliation talks in Geneva ended Nov. 11 with signs of progress toward a restructuring of Lebanon's political system. The meetings had been conducted by representatives of the warring factions in Lebanon after the leaders adjourned the conference Nov. 4 to give President Amin Gemayel time to find a formula to end Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon. [See 1983 [Lebanese Unity Talks Begin in Geneva; Gemayel Cites Urgency](#)]

The delegates said they would take their proposals back to the leaders of their factions for discussions before convening a second round of talks in a week or so. In Lebanon, however, the shaky cease-fire imposed in September continued to crumble, and military events threatened to undermine the results of the conference.

Delegates attending the Geneva conference said the factions had discussed a formula for political changes to give increased representation in government to Lebanon's Moslem majority. The current system of government, in existence since Lebanon's independence in 1943, allotted government positions and parliamentary seats on the basis of religion. Lebanon's Maronite Christian minority was guaranteed the presidency, and Christians were allotted a 6 to 5 majority of the seats in parliament.

Officials at the reconciliation talks said the participants had reached a broad consensus on sectarian parity in parliament and on the creation of a constitutional court. They also reportedly had discussed creation of a Shiite Moslem vice presidency and a second house of parliament, a variety of electoral changes, and Christian-Moslem parity in the ranks of the army.

### Cease-Fire Crumbles

As the delegates returned from Geneva, however, the shaky cease-fire imposed in September continued to erode. [See 1983 [Truck Bomb Destroys Israeli Lebanon HQ; 60 Die, Israel Retaliates](#), 1983 [Lebanon Cease-Fire Agreed, National Reconciliation Talks Set; U.S. Congress OKs Troop Stay](#)]

Heavy clashes broke out Nov. 13 and Nov. 14 between the Lebanese army and Druse Moslem militiamen around the strategic mountain town of Suk al Gharb, on the heights overlooking Beirut. Christian east Beirut was hit repeatedly by rockets Nov. 14, for the first time since the September truce.

Meanwhile, leading Christian and Druse representatives had begun disputing what had been agreed to in Geneva. The New York Times Nov. 14 reported that Fady Frem, the leader of the Christian Phalangist militia, had issued a statement challenging the conference's characterization of Lebanon as "Arab in its belonging and identity," a statement that was the conference's sole official area of agreement to date.

Pierre Gemayel, the leader of the Christian Phalange Party, which was only loosely tied to the Phalangist militia, said in an interview Nov. 13 that the Maronite community did not intend to relinquish any privileges. Constitutional provisions such as a guaranteed number of seats in parliament and the office of the presidency, he said, were the Maronite minority's sole guarantee of safety.

Druse leader Walid Jumblat replied with a statement saying that recent pronouncements by Christian leaders indicated that they were preparing for another round of war.

The latest political and military conflicts came as Donald Rumsfeld, President Reagan's latest special envoy to the Middle East, held his first talks in Beirut with President Gemayel, Premier Shafik al-Wazan and other top Lebanese leaders Nov. 13 and Nov. 14. [See 1983 [Middle East: Rumsfeld Named Mideast Envoy](#)]

### Syria Fires at U.S. Jets

Syrian antiaircraft batteries Nov. 10 fired on four U.S. F-14 jet fighters over Syrian military positions in eastern Lebanon, a Syrian military spokesman in Damascus announced.

The U.S. confirmed that one U.S. Navy F-14 had encountered "what appeared to be antiaircraft fire" on a reconnaissance flight but had not been hit. Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger sought to minimize the incident, saying he did not regard it as "unusual or surprising."

The incident followed a week of steadily mounting tension between Syrian forces and those of the U.S. and Israel. [See 1983 [Truck Bomb Destroys Israeli Lebanon HQ; 60 Die, Israel Retaliates](#)]

Syrian gunners apparently again fired on U.S. reconnaissance jets Nov. 11, prompting a warning from U.S. National Security Adviser

Robert C. McFarlane. He told television interviewers Nov. 13 that "it cannot become a precedent that American citizens or American forces can be attacked with impunity . . . whether it is [by] Syria or some other country."

### Israelis Bomb Pro-Iranian Base

Israeli jets Nov. 16 bombed an eastern Lebanon base of a pro-Iranian Shiite Moslem militia suspected of involvement in recent truck-bombings that destroyed U.S., French and Israeli military headquarters buildings in Lebanon. [See 1983 [Truck Bomb Destroys Israeli Lebanon HQ; 60 Die, Israel Retaliates](#), 1983 [Over 200 U.S. Marines Killed in Beirut Suicide Bomb Attack; 2d Blast Kills More Than 40 French](#)]

The base, at Nabi Chit, near the Syrian border in eastern Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, was said to be a training base of Islamic Amal, a pro-Iranian group that had broken with Lebanon's Shiite Amal militia. U.S. officials privately accused Islamic Amal and its leader, Hussein Mussawi, of providing personnel, explosives or logistical support, or possibly all three, for the Oct. 23 bombing at the U.S. Marine base in Beirut that claimed 239 lives. Publicly, U.S. administration officials vowed revenge as soon as guilt was firmly established. In interviews, Mussawi had applauded the bombings but denied his group's involvement. [See 1983 [Over 200 U.S. Marines Killed in Beirut Suicide Bomb Attack; 2d Blast Kills More Than 40 French](#)]

According to Beirut radio, four Israeli warplanes had struck two training camps and an ammunition dump at the base the morning of Nov. 16. At least three large buildings were said to have been blown up, and continuing explosions at the ammunition dump impaired rescue operations. The Lebanese Christian Phalangist radio said some 30 persons had been killed and 50 wounded. There was no independent confirmation, and militiamen barred the press from the area.

An Israeli military spokesman in Tel Aviv did not specifically link the raid with the Nov. 4 bombing of the Israeli military headquarters in Tyre, which Israeli officials had claimed to be the work of Islamic Amal, saying only that Israel had struck a "terrorist training base and staging point" in Lebanon.

The Israeli state radio reported that the raid had been launched after Israeli officials concluded that the U.S. was not going to retaliate on its own for the Oct. 23 bombing. But government officials denied the report. Israeli jets later in the day hit Palestinian and Syrian positions around the city of Bhamdun, on the Beirut-Damascus highway.

The attack on the Islamic Amal base was said to be the first Israeli operation against Lebanese Shiites, who were the majority of the population in the Israeli occupation zone in southern Lebanon. A defense ministry spokesman said the raids were "basically a message to the Shiite groups in that area that they are not immune to reprisals by virtue of their closeness to the Syrians."

Reagan administration officials privately expressed satisfaction at the Israeli raid, according to a Nov. 16 New York Times dispatch. Publicly, State Department spokesman John Hughes acknowledged that while it "may well have been the case" that the Shiite base had been connected with the Oct. 23 bombing, "there was no consultation, no coordination" between Israel and the U.S.

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### [Modern Language Association \(MLA\)](#)

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