

June 4, 2025

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Abbas Al Sabagh's article ["Public Sector: Vacancies at 70%, Average age 55... Mekki Stresses to An-Nahar the Need for Restructuring Before Hiring"](#), published in *An-Nahar* on May 27, 2025, provides an examination of the critical challenges plaguing Lebanon's public sector, particularly the high vacancy rates, aging workforce, and bureaucratic stagnation. His reporting is not only factual but also reflective of deep systematic issues that hinder effective governance and employment in the country.

Al Sabagh highlights that Lebanon's public administration suffers from an acute staffing crisis, with staggering 70% vacancy rate across various departments. This shortage, as the article outlines, is exacerbated by a combination of factors: legal hiring freezes stipulated in the 2019 budget law, outdated recruitment procedures, and widespread political interference. Maan Barazy in his article published in [Now Lebanon](#) corroborates this with a more updated estimate of a 73% vacancy rate, with 19,600 unfilled positions, especially acute among second grade employees just below the position of director general. The average rate of current employees is approaching 55, indicating a lack of young talent and an inevitable wave of retirements that will further strain the system. The Civil Service Council's data - approximately 450 employees reaching the legal retirement age this year - reinforces the urgency of the situation. However, rather than addressing this gap, the government continues to block appointments through decrees or allow circumvention via contract-based hiring and service purchases, often driven by political favoritism.

The Annahar article delves deeply into the contradiction between constitutional provisions and political practices. Article 12 of the Lebanese Constitution guarantees equal opportunity for all citizens in public employment, emphasizing merit and competence. Yet, article 80 of the 2019 budget law contradicts this, freezing recruitment through legitimate channels while failing to curb politically motivated appointments. This inconsistency not only undermines trust in public administration but also perpetuates political favoritism – a point that decries the system's reliance on "wasta", meaning connections, rather than qualifications. This resonates with the plight of thousands of qualified graduates unable to secure stable employment despite their credentials.

Nawal Nasr's insights, featured prominently in the article, further illustrate the bureaucratic dysfunction. She rightly questions the narrative of public sector inflation by pointing out that while the military sector continues to expand, essential administrative roles remain vacant. Nasr also calls attention to the misuse of "contracting" and "assignment" methods that bypass competitive examinations, allowing unqualified or politically connected individuals to occupy critical positions. Liliane Mokbel in her published article in [This is Beirut](#), reinforces this point, noting that since 2017, approximately 37,000 individuals were arbitrarily recruited - 5,013 of them after the salary scale law's enactment in violation of existing regulations. This illegal recruitment continues to strain Lebanon's finances, as these hires benefit from generous bonuses, allowances, and even overseas travel indemnities despite a lack of real need.

Al Sabagh also draws attention to the migration of public employees following the 2020 financial crisis. The collapse of the Lebanese pound against the dollar, coupled with skyrocketing transportation costs and declining salaries, has forced many to resign or abandon their posts. Barazy highlights that the public administration employs approximately 300,000 civil servants, with salaries, wages, and benefits alone constituting about 53% of total government expenditures in the 2025 budget, leaving limited funds for investment and development, amounting to \$150 million a month, almost 15% of total foreign reserves. This attrition compounds the structural weaknesses of the administration and underscores the need for urgent intervention.

A notable strength of the article is its exploration of redundancy within Lebanon's ministries and funds. Entities like the Ministry of Displaced Persons and the National Fund for Displaced Persons - established decades ago - now serve limited functions, yet continue to absorb public funds and staff. Al Sabagh questions the logic of maintaining these institutions when their relevance has waned, effectively highlighting opportunities for streamlining and fiscal responsibility.

Minister Fadi Makki's perspective, as reported by Al Sabagh, provides a glimmer of hope, albeit with cautious optimism. Makki acknowledges the vacancy crisis and emphasizes the need for modernization and restructuring before filling positions. He highlights the role of technology and outlines a plan to conduct a comprehensive census of vacant posts, aiming to integrate digital solutions into public administration. However, the article notes that no actual job eliminations or mergers have yet occurred, suggesting that while strategic planning is underway, concrete implementation remains elusive.

Therefore, Al Sabagh's article is a critical exposé of Lebanon's public sector employment crisis. It meticulously outlines the challenges: high vacancy rates, an aging workforce, legal contradictions, political patronage, administrative redundancy, and the impact of economic collapse. By combining statistical data, constitutional analysis, and expert commentary, the piece underscores the urgency of public sector reform. Without immediate and transparent restructuring that prioritizes merit and efficiency, Lebanon's public administration risks further deterioration, exacerbating unemployment and undermining public trust.

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