

# 2022 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS OBSERVATION REPORT



## LADE

LEBANESE ASSOCIATION FOR  
DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS

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**Report writer: Wissam El Lahham**

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# FOREWORD

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of May, one day after the ballot boxes were closed, the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE) published a preliminary report entitled “Chaos, Violations, and Harassment of Observers,” which summed up our observations and the violations documented by LADE’s 1,200 observers who monitored the electoral process across Lebanese territories. This title was not hasty or unfair towards the parties directly entrusted with the organization and management of the elections, nor towards the powers that be in Lebanon in general. In fact, the May elections were not democratic in the true and broad sense of the term. This is evidenced by the numerous documented violations mentioned in this report and by the events that preceded and accompanied the elections. In our opinion, no elections held in Lebanon since LADE’s establishment in 1996 could be truly described as democratic, fair, or transparent.

That said, this year’s elections were exceptional, given the political, economic, and social context in which they were held. Many factors contributed to this exceptional or even fateful character, which commanded close local and international monitoring, including: the sweeping and cross-sectarian October 17, 2019 uprising, the likes of which Lebanon had never seen in its modern history; the catastrophic Beirut Port explosion, which destroyed large parts of the capital and left hundreds dead and wounded and thousands of families homeless; the devaluation of the national currency relative to the U.S. dollar, which severely affected the purchasing power of large segments of the population; and, finally, the changes on the political scene after one of the key actors decided to withdraw from the electoral race.

We should note that the documented violations, despite their severity, were not caused overnight, but rather find their roots in a political system and an electoral law incapable of ensuring fair, transparent, and effective representative democracy. Therefore, despite the massive scale of the violations mentioned in this report, which far exceed those documented in the 2018 elections, the main problem, or the main violation, is the sectarian and clientelist nature of the political regime in place in Lebanon. Sectarianism and clientelism in Lebanon are in part established by constitutional and legal texts, but mostly by de facto practices. This turns elections in Lebanon into an opportunity for the political class, which we will refer to in this report as the “patronage regime,” to solidify its interests and dominance through all means available. These include psychological and physical violence, divisive sectarian discourse, extortion, and bribery in an attempt to sway voters in violation of the law, of democratic principles, and of people’s freedom to express their opinion in the ballot boxes. These types of violations were the most numerous and the most serious.

The current report deconstructs the operating mechanisms of the patronage regime through a historical overview of its emergence and an analysis of the reasons, motives, and realities that led to the systematic destruction of the state and public institutions in favor of the powerful political leaders who represent the pillars of this regime (hereinafter referred to as the *za’ims*). To accomplish their aims, these *za’ims* used constitutional or legal arguments, such as consociational democracy, National Pact power-sharing principles, constitutional loopholes, or interpretations of legal and constitutional texts as a pretext to perpetuate divisions and guarantee their political interests. The report also summarizes the main events and factors that impacted the electoral process as a whole, including the controversial amendments introduced to the Electoral Law in

force (No. 44/2017) and their political dimension. It also presents a set of recommendations that LADE has long been calling for. LADE had included these recommendations in its 2018 report, but they fell on deaf ears.

At the end of our current report, we recommend a series of reforms that we believe are essential and that will contribute to fairer and more democratic elections going forward if adopted. Some of these reforms require constitutional or legal amendments, while others only require a shift in perspective and performance by the parties entrusted with managing the various stages of the elections.

Our report is primarily based on the violations documented by Lade, and it would not have been possible without the efforts of our volunteer observers who put their trust in LADE and its organized, professional, and neutral work, despite the deteriorating conditions at all levels. I would also like to seize this opportunity to thank LADE's coordinators and long-term observers for their great efforts, as well as members of the Executive Office and the Administrative Board. I offer each and every one of them my sincere gratitude and appreciation.

Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE)  
Secretary-General  
Rony Al Assaad

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2022 elections were held amid exceptional circumstances that have never before been seen in Lebanon's modern history. The nature of the political system in place in Lebanon, which we will refer to as the "patronage regime" in this report, dictated the legal framework of the elections and the amendments made thereto and practically organized the entire electoral process. Moreover, the internal political, economic, and social developments that Lebanon has witnessed since the previous parliamentary elections (2018) have all had a significant impact on the 2022 elections.

The role of the patronage regime, which is discussed in detail in LADE's current report, was not trivial in the electoral process, as it manifested itself in numerous ways. Over the years, this regime has politicized public service and the judiciary, undermined union action, and established practices that disrupt the work of constitutional institutions, whereby the guardians of this regime constantly seek to solidify it by all means possible, including elections.

The massive popular movement that erupted in Lebanon at the end of 2019 has played a significant role in threatening the legitimacy of the patronage regime. This movement was decentralized and non-sectarian, and it managed to reclaim public spaces. The fight against corruption and the strengthening of the rule of law and of public institutions were among the most prominent popular demands. This constituted a true threat to the patronage regime, whose guardians draw their strength from claiming to defend their sect and by perpetuating narrow localist allegiances. However, with the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic and the announcement of the state of general mobilization, which restricted citizens' freedoms, the wave of protests receded. The protests briefly resurged after the catastrophic Beirut Port explosion on August 4, 2020, which instilled a strong desire in the Lebanese people to see the perpetrators held accountable. All of this coincided with unprecedented crises in the country, such as the sharp and ongoing devaluation of the Lebanese pound relative to the U.S. dollar, the gradual collapse of all public services, and the massive increase in the price of fuel and consumer products, forcing people to wait in long queues for hours to secure part of their needs.

The general atmosphere surrounding the elections was marked by uncertainty. There was talk on multiple occasions of the possibility of postponing the elections, despite the previous attempts to bring forward the date of the elections to March, which caused a great deal of confusion until the last few days preceding the elections. This was exacerbated by the fact that many dysfunctional aspects of the Electoral Law No. 44/2017 were not addressed, such as the distribution of electoral constituencies, blank ballots, the campaign spending limit, the women's quota, and the vote counting mechanism.

In the run up to the elections, LADE observed numerous violations in all constituencies. These were documented in reports prepared by 42 observers spread across all Lebanese qazas.

## **Violations included:**

- Electoral bribes disguised as "aid."
- Unequal media coverage.
- Violence and incitement.
- Abuse of power by local authorities and political parties.

LADE also observed the parliamentary elections held in several Arab and foreign countries on Friday, May 6, and Sunday, May 8, for non-resident Lebanese citizens. Eighty LADE observers were spread across polling centers in 29 countries.

LADE observers also observed the electoral process from the operations room of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, whereby they monitored every detail of the voting days, from the opening of the first ballot box until the closing of the last one.

The elections of non-resident Lebanese citizens were calm and well-organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants, which was very cooperative with observers and sought to promptly resolve any issues raised by LADE.

**Violations included:**

- Pressure on voters.
- Breach of ballot secrecy.
- Miscellaneous organizational obstacles.

As for the elections of polling station officers and clerks on Thursday, May 12, 2022, LADE deployed 76 observers across all polling centers and managed to detect a large number of violations, including:

- Lack of knowledge by polling station officers and clerks regarding the law.
- Chaos and lack of organization.
- Breach of the principle of neutrality.
- Circumvention of the law.

The parliamentary elections in Lebanon were held on Sunday, May 15, 2022.

Although holding elections is a purely constitutional obligation, the political authorities framed it as an achievement to be celebrated. However, with the help of more than 1,200 observers, LADE was able to document many flagrant violations undermining the integrity of the electoral process and stripping this “democratic celebration,” as described by the authorities, of its very essence.

These violations included:

- Various logistical problems.
- Harassment of observers.
- Security Incidents and Cases of Violence.
- Electoral Advertising.
- Breach of Ballot Secrecy.
- Violations during Vote Counting and Tabulation.

**In light of the above, LADE proposes recommendations related to the Constitution, the Electoral Law and electoral system, and the Electoral Supervisory Commission, in addition to a series of procedures to ensure the smooth running of the elections and other laws that could improve political participation. These include:**

### **CONSTITUTION:**

- Amend Article 19 of the Constitution related to the powers of the Constitutional Council, enabling the latter to supervise the elections effectively without limiting its role to receiving information and reports from the Ministry of Interior and the Electoral Supervisory Commission. This includes, as is the case in France, giving it the power to appoint its own representatives from among civil and administrative judges, who should be empowered to enter polling stations and record any violations they encounter, then report back to the Constitutional Council to make a final decision when looking into electoral appeals.
- Amend Article 21 of the Constitution to lower the voting age to 18.
- Implement Article 95 of the Constitution by establishing a National Committee to study and propose the means to ensure the abolition of political sectarianism.
- Implement Article 22 of the Constitution by establishing a Senate and specifying its powers.
- Add an article to the Constitution prohibiting the amendment of the electoral law one year before the upcoming elections.

### **CONSTITUTIONAL COUNCIL:**

- Amend Article 24 of the Law on the Establishment of the Constitutional Council to empower competent civil bodies to file reviews, complaints, and appeals on the electoral process before the Constitutional Council.

### **ELECTORAL SYSTEM:**

- Reconsider the distribution of constituencies in a way that respects the constitutional obligation to give every vote the same electoral value, while also applying actual proportional representation. Having medium-sized constituencies with an equal and balanced number of seats (around 20 seats per constituency) is a guarantee for democracy and justice.
- Amend Article 98 of the Electoral Law by abolishing the preferential vote and adopting the closed list system with a pre-arranged order of candidates based on the zebra system (alternating between women and men on the candidate lists).
- Amend Article 99 of the Electoral Law by eliminating the electoral quotient or reducing it to 5% or less.
- Revoke Articles 112, 121, and 122 of the Electoral Law on the expatriate constituency and enable expatriates to vote for candidates running in electoral constituencies within Lebanon, similar to resident voters.
- Impose a 50% women's quota in the composition of lists as a provisional measure to ensure that female candidates have equal opportunities as male candidates by adopting appropriate procedures.

## **ELECTORAL LAW:**

- Amend Articles 4, 5, and 6 of the Electoral Law to enable members of the LAF and security forces and detainees under investigation to vote, as well as to enable naturalized persons to vote and run as candidates upon receiving their citizenship.
- Amend Article 7 of the Electoral Law to reduce the candidacy age to 22 years.
- Revoke Article 84 of the Electoral Law on the electronic magnetic card, since the latter can be used by powerful parties to pressure voters, not to mention the complications related to its issuance and the fact that it serves no particular benefit.

## **ELECTORAL FUNDING, SPENDING, AND ADVERTISING:**

- Amend Article 58 of the Electoral Law by not classifying voter transport under the campaign spending of candidates. Rather, this practice should be prohibited entirely and considered to be a form of electoral bribery.
- Amend Article 59 of the Electoral Law to include lifting bank secrecy on all accounts of all candidates, their spouses, their ascendants, and their descendants during the electoral campaign.
- Amend Article 60 of the Electoral Law by considering the voluntary work of representatives part of electoral spending.
- Revoke paragraph 2 of Article 62 which benefits political parties that are accustomed to clientelism, by classifying all in-kind and cash contributions as a form of bribery, whether candidates have been offering such contributions for a long time or not. Travel expenses and transportation fees should also be considered a form of bribery.

## **ELECTORAL SUPERVISORY COMMISSION:**

- Amend Chapter III of the Electoral Law to establish a permanent, independent electoral administration body and transfer all relevant competencies from the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities to the said body. This body should also be given complete financial independence and entrusted with managing the parliamentary elections in Lebanon and abroad rather than any other ministry.
- Provide the Commission with its own permanent, annual budget, to be included in the state's general budget under a separate chapter.
- Grant the Commission legal personality with prosecution powers and enable it to enforce its own procedural and executive decisions through a security agency placed under its direct command. There should also be specific criminal penalties for violations of the Electoral Law.

## **PROCEDURES:**

- Ensure equality between all candidates in order for them to carry out their electoral campaigns inside Lebanon and abroad without any pressure or prohibition.
- Further ensure ballot secrecy by prohibiting representatives from escorting voters behind the booth and preventing voters from photographing the ballot paper inside the booth.
- Strengthen communication between the Electoral Supervisory Commission and the public, raise voter's awareness on the electoral process, and optimize the Commission's cooperation with specialized organizations.

# INTRODUCTION

Elections are the most efficient method that can, and should, in principle, guarantee a minimum level of freedom and equality between citizens.

They were introduced by representative democracies in modern states in order to enshrine the popular legitimacy of political authorities. Thus, electoral processes cannot be understood by relying exclusively on the constitutional and legal texts that govern them. To be sure, the legal and institutional framework within which elections are held is a crucial and essential criterion for assessing the integrity of elections and the extent to which they respect democratic principles. However, this criterion alone is not enough without taking into account the political regime that governs those elections and oversees their various stages.

**In light of the above, it is necessary to take the following factors into account when analyzing the course of the Lebanese parliamentary elections that took place in May 2022:**

- The nature of the current Lebanese political regime which governs the elections.
- The internal political developments in Lebanon since the last parliamentary elections (2018) and their relationship with regional and international developments.
- The legal framework for the elections and the amendments made thereto.

The first chapter of this report addresses these factors to form a clear understanding of the electoral process in Lebanon. It discusses in some detail the reality of the political regime and the mechanisms it uses in order to tighten its grip over society. The second section of this chapter is dedicated to analyzing the main political developments in Lebanon in the past four years and their socioeconomic impacts, which will enhance our understanding of the electoral scene. The third section discusses the institutional aspects related to the evolution of constitutional dynamics in Lebanon and the controversy surrounding the amendment of the 2017 Electoral Law. The final two chapters highlight the process of 2022 elections and the recommendations and sum up the significance of elections under the current Lebanese political regime, in light of the explanation presented in the previous sections.



# CHAPTER I

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## POLITICAL REGIME GOVERNING THE ELECTIONS

# POLITICAL REGIME GOVERNING THE ELECTIONS

The term “Lebanese political regime” does not exclusively refer to the set of constitutional frameworks that govern relations between political institutions. In a pragmatic sense, the political regime refers to the actual way in which the various factions of the ruling class exercise their authority and the balance established among them to share interests and maintain power.

Formally, Lebanon adopts a parliamentary system as stipulated in Paragraph “c” of the preamble to the Constitution. Constitutional provisions since the establishment of the Lebanese Republic in 1926 have enshrined all the principles of the traditional parliamentary system, based on the flexible separation of powers. The cabinet is politically responsible before Parliament, in accordance with the principle of cabinet solidarity and the theoretical capacity of the executive authority to dissolve Parliament.

Additionally, Lebanon adopts a form of consociational democracy, which was explicitly enshrining in the constitutional amendments of 1990 pursuant to the “National Accord Document,” also known as the Taif Agreement. Lebanon’s consociational democracy system is based on the necessity of ensuring the representation of each sect within constitutional institutions. It is also based on the autonomy of sects in managing their affairs, having their own personal status law, and enjoying freedom of education.

However, the existing Lebanese political regime is in fact a “patronage regime” that took shape during the war and was consolidated in 1992, spreading throughout state administrations, the judiciary, and security forces.

The za’im (or powerful political leader) is not a legal concept, but rather a de facto authority. Therefore, we can only define the za’im by examining his role in the Lebanese system and observing his influence on public authorities, regardless of the official position he occupies. As such, we can define the za’im based on the following features:

- The za’im claims to represent a sect and preserve its interests within state institutions, and his legitimacy stems from that claim. However, this claim is invalid because the Lebanese legal system does not recognize the existence of sect representatives at the political level. According to Article 27 of the Constitution, Members of Parliament represent the entire nation rather than their sect, as they are elected by all voters regardless of their sect. MPs derive their representative legitimacy from the Lebanese people, who are the source of authority, and not from the sect to which they belong. The Constitutional Council explicitly affirmed this in a decision<sup>1</sup> issued in 2000.

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<sup>1</sup> Constitutional Council, Decision No. 2/2000 of June 8, 2000: “Entrusting the selection of the Sheikh Akl of the Druze community to the consensus of incumbent Druze MPs constitutes a violation of the provisions of the Constitution, namely Article 27. These MPs cannot be considered representatives of the Druze community, as Article 27 of the Constitution stipulates that Members of Parliament shall represent the entire nation and not their specific sect, region, or even their voters. This means that MPs are not elected by the members of their sect, but rather by all the voters in the electoral constituency regardless of their sects. In accordance with Article 27, laws enacted by Parliament are in fact issued by MPs in their capacity as representatives of the Lebanese people rather than of sects. Otherwise, each group of MPs belonging to a particular sect would have the right to object to any bill or law proposal on the affairs or rights of the sect to which this group belongs, thus preventing its approval. This contradicts the provisions of the Constitution and the main constitutional foundations upon which the spirit of society and the nation are based, and which are stipulated in the preamble to the Constitution.”

- The za'im is the link between sect members and state institutions. This means that individuals can only obtain their rights through their connection to the za'im: this clientelism constitutes the primary cause of corruption in Lebanon. Clientelism is not a trivial phenomenon, but rather a structural component of the patronage regime, which can only function through the za'im's control over power and wealth. Thus, the za'im tends to buy the loyalty of individuals and provide them with services in return for their votes during the elections and their political submission.
- The za'im transformed clientelism from an enabling tool to an absolute monopoly: clientelism existed in Lebanon before the patronage regime, and it is prevalent in various countries around the world to different degrees. However, the patronage regime transformed clientelism into a monopolistic tool that dominates every sector and institution in the country. In order to obtain any right or service provided by the state, an individual belonging to a particular sect is forced to pass through the za'im of this sect. The za'im's leadership can no longer be bypassed, as was the case before the war. This reveals an additional feature of this new form of clientelism: it is not only monopolistic, but it has also become purely sectarian. In the early stages of the post-independence republic, the regime's composition was more diversified in terms of sects, whereby the za'im distributed his clientelist "services" to individuals from various sects.
- Prior to 1975, clientelism was part of a hierarchy headed by the President of the Republic, who controlled the state's assets through broad constitutional powers. Consequently, the za'ims had to submit to the authority of the President in order to preserve their clientelist interests. Today, the Presidency of the Republic has lost this role, and the Lebanese state no longer has a powerful authority to which the za'ims must

refer. Rather, loyalties in each public administration are split between the different za'ims, who have become the clientelist references of their respective sects. Thus, centralized decision-making has been replaced by the authoritarian consensus among za'ims.

- The za'im resorts to intimidation and enticement as the preferred method to preserve his status within the regime: Although clientelism is the method by which za'ims buy political loyalty, they also resort to more dangerous methods to ensure obedience, i.e. intimidation and instilling fear of the other. By presenting himself as the defender of his sect's interests, the za'im implies to his followers that they are constantly facing an imminent threat from the za'ims of other sects, who are waiting for an opportunity to seize their jobs and interests in the state and in society. Thus, it is clear how the za'im plays a double role: He incites his followers through sectarianism when his interests are jeopardized, and then intervenes to portray himself as a savior and a moderate figure that prevents internal strife among Lebanese.

In light of the above, it is clear that the one characteristic linking all the different aspects of the patronage regime is the systematic undermining of the state and its institutions. The za'im makes compromises, exchanges interests, shares state administrations, violates the Constitution, and interferes with the work of the judiciary. Hence, he weakens and marginalizes the state, as his very existence is the antithesis of the state; his role ceases to exist when the state becomes strong. A powerful state frees the individual from the arbitrary and personal dependence on the za'im and replaces the logic of clientelism with the logic of rights.

The patronage regime has expanded significantly, as each za'im established auxiliary institutions to perpetuate his control and to further deprive the state of its essence. Sect leaders own universities,

hospitals, schools, and media outlets. Further, they have infiltrated trade unions and undermined class solidarity among workers, replacing it with personal loyalty under the pretext of sectarian representation. This explains why the followers of the za'im hail from different social classes, including the rich and the poor, the educated and the uneducated, farmers, merchants, and industrialists.

Considering that the relationship between the za'im and his followers is strictly clientelist, he cannot adopt a social or economic project that defends a particular class, as it would inevitably lead to the division of his "party" due to the emergence of conflicts of interest among its members. Deceptive concepts are often used to describe how the patronage regime operates: The distribution of services becomes socioeconomic development, and buying citizens' loyalty becomes a political act that is part of the legitimate democratic competition to garner the largest possible number of votes in the elections.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, the patronage regime, as a de facto authority, can only be understood by analyzing this reality, far from the discourse sanctifying the National Pact and coexistence. Some za'ims have established themselves through armed violence and their association with foreign powers. Meanwhile, others established themselves through their wealth and regional alliances. Therefore, it can be said that in its relationship with the state and society, the patronage regime is marked by the following characteristics:

- The politicization of public office at the expense of merit, which has undermined the independence of public administrations, leading citizens to no longer view these administrations as entities that provide state services in a fair, transparent, and equal manner.
- The politicization of the judiciary and the transformation of its main decision-

making positions into areas of influence to reinforce the authority of za'ims and grant them immunity from any meaningful prosecution. The interference of za'ims in the work of the judiciary has led to its politicization and has undermined its credibility, leading to impunity and to the mainstreaming of non-liability by anonymizing the actual perpetrators or by simply passing the buck. The za'ims have a vested interest in politicizing the judiciary, not only to strengthen their grip over state institutions and citizens, but also because it allows each za'im to evade justice under the pretext that the judiciary is politicized.

- Undermining trade unions and fragmenting social solidarity among Lebanese citizens, especially by turning the General Confederation of Lebanese Workers into a tool in the hands of the za'ims. Thus, instead of being the entity around which citizens belonging to one social class unite in order to defend their rights, the union became one of the many areas of influence that serve the authoritarian goals of the patronage regime.
- Disseminating practices that disrupt the work of constitutional institutions under the pretext of "compliance with the National Pact." These include preventing Parliament or the Council of Ministers from convening without the presence of representatives of all sects. Another example of these unconstitutional practices is the quota system within the Constitutional Council as well as other state administrations and institutions, by allocating positions to specific sects and linking the appointment of members to the endorsement of the sect leader.
- The za'ims' firm commitment to maintaining the regime and preventing true powers calling for change from jeopardizing their interests. Despite the rivalry between the different za'ims,

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<sup>2</sup> "Patrons and clients themselves usually interpret their system in terms of redistribution, exchange and democracy. The patron really believes he is helping the poor, and the client is often extremely grateful for the job, promotion, welfare service he receives." (Michael Johnson, *Class and Client in Beirut*, Ithaca Press, London and Atlantic Highlands, 1986, p. 5).

evident in their public discourse, they eventually agree to share official appointments (based on power sharing arrangements) and distribute the state's assets among their followers. They also tend to build circumstantial alliances during the parliamentary, municipal, and trade union elections under the pretext of coexistence or preserving national unity, while their actual goal is to prevent any change that might jeopardize the authoritarian interests of the patronage regime.

# FIRST: POLITICAL CONTEXT OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

The parliamentary elections took place under exceptional conditions that Lebanon has never witnessed in its modern history, at least since the end of the civil war in 1990 and the power grab by the patronage regime after the symbolic elections of 1992. This regime then evolved and expanded with the advent of new political actors following the withdrawal of the Syrian Army from Lebanon in April 2005.

The massive popular movement that Lebanon witnessed on October 17, 2019 can be considered a pivotal point that seriously threatened the legitimacy of the patronage regime. In that year, Lebanon faced an unprecedented state of political awareness that was the culmination of a series of scattered movements that began with the popular uprising against Syrian tutelage in 2005, followed by the protests refusing the extension of President Emile Lahoud's term, the movement to overthrow the sectarian regime, and the wave of mass protests that erupted in August 2015 due to the waste crisis. However, unlike all the aforementioned movements, the 2019 uprising threatened the main pillars of the political regime and undermined the legitimacy of the za'ims.

This uprising was characterized not only by the large-scale popular participation, but also by its decentralization, as it was not limited to the capital Beirut. The fact that the protests spread across all Lebanese regions seriously perplexed the parties in power, which had never faced such a non-sectarian movement. The patronage regime tolerates protests that are instigated by sectarian forces, as they do not threaten its legitimacy, but rather reinforce its control over society by keeping citizens within

the limits that the za'ims accept or even proclaim. The importance of the October 17, 2019 uprising stems from the fact that it was cross-sectarian. This does not necessarily imply that all those who participated in the uprising support the abolition of confessionalism or the establishment of a secular state. This is exactly what concerned the patronage regime, as Lebanese citizens seemed to reject the authority of the za'ims, given their direct responsibility for the collapse of state institutions and the squandering of society's assets. Thus, this wave of protests has called the legitimacy of the za'im into question, as the latter claims to defend his sect and not Lebanese citizens as a whole. When the za'im loses his sectarian legitimacy, his truth is laid bare: He is part of a system that is the antithesis of the powerful state, and he can only exist by transforming state institutions into channels of influence to buy the loyalty of individuals and distribute spoils by exploiting the needs of Lebanese citizens and manipulating their fears.

With the eruption of the popular uprising and the regime's failure to control it, the za'ims were divided into two main groups, each adopting a different strategy that can be summarized as follows:

- First strategy: Dismissing internal causes in favor of regional and international politics and claiming that the protests are the product of an external conspiracy (Hezbollah, Amal Movement, the Free Patriotic Movement...). The patronage regime always tends to divert the discussion from the internal level towards relations and the regional conflict, thereby denying its direct

responsibility for the collapse by blaming external forces. This tactic certainly has substantial benefits for its proponents, as it allows the za'im to enhance his legitimacy by portraying himself as the hero warding off endless foreign conspiracies and confronting the political and economic embargo imposed on Lebanon. Regardless of whether there is such a conspiracy or not and the suspicious role of major powers, which always seek to serve their interests, we cannot explain the rampant corruption and clientelism and the dissolution of state institutions by exclusively invoking foreign relations, which could be used to justify opposing views. It should be noted that the patronage regime requests foreign intervention and awaits international and regional settlements in order to arrange its internal affairs. Foreign conspiracies, if any, can only succeed where there is no actual state, as it is easier for foreign countries to use za'ims willing to act as proxies to implement their agenda.

- Second strategy (passing the buck): It is an effective method developed by the patronage regime, which has dominated political discourse, whereby each za'im blames the other. This tactic leads to permanent division of Lebanese society, as it shifts the discussion from the economic collapse and the rampant corruption to bilateral debates that have nothing to do with the interests of society as a whole. Thus, the za'ims impose their agenda by setting Lebanese citizens against each other, since the state of hostility between citizens allows the regime to secure its continuity and renew its sectarian legitimacy. A recent variant of this strategy is blaming one party for all the problems facing the country. It is a tactic that benefits the whole patronage regime, as the accused party (Hezbollah) appears to its supporters as the victim of a conspiracy,

while the za'ims opposed to it (Lebanese Forces, Future Movement, Progressive Socialist Party, etc.) are able to avoid any serious accountability while awaiting an authoritarian settlement between all the pillars of the patronage regime, which would once again consolidate their control over the state.

While the popular protests remained without an organizational framework capable of uniting the different forces, a general demand was the need to form an independent cabinet with extraordinary powers, with a mandate from Parliament allowing it to issue legislative decrees. Additionally, at the beginning of the movement, people called for early parliamentary elections. This means that the Parliament elected in 2018 would pass a law to shorten its mandate prior to May 2022, in order to hold elections before that date.

The October 17 uprising enabled citizens to regain control of public squares, which had been dominated by sectarian parties for years. It also enabled citizens to produce a new political discourse outside the control of the patronage regime, which had monopolized public spaces and imposed its political narrative on society for decades. However, these sit-ins and protests were subjected to systematic attacks by groups affiliated with political parties, who repeatedly assaulted protesters by destroying and burning their tents. This was coupled with the failure of security forces to provide the necessary protection for protesters. Furthermore, security forces violently suppressed the protests, prompting the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon to demand on December 16, 2019 an "investigation of the incidents as well as of use of excessive force by the security forces."<sup>3</sup>

The wave of protests subsided in early 2020 and stopped completely during the Covid-19 pandemic. Political powers took

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<sup>3</sup> Tweet by former United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon Jan Kubiš on December 16, 2019, <https://twitter.com/UNJanKubis/status/1206525070539182080>.

advantage of this health hazard to declare a state of general mobilization under Decree No. 6198 issued on March 15, 2020. This decree, endorsed by the Council of Ministers, expanded the interpretation of the general mobilization stipulated in the National Defense Law of 1983 in a way that limits citizens' freedoms, by imposing curfews and forcing shops to close at specific times, as well as by depriving individuals of the freedom of movement except after obtaining permission from public authorities.

The protests only resurged after the devastating Beirut Port explosion on August 4, 2020, which killed hundreds, injured thousands, destroyed large parts of Beirut, and displaced thousands of residents who suddenly found themselves homeless. The government responded to the dangerous repercussions of the explosion by once again resorting to security measures that limit the freedom of citizens. By virtue of Decree No. 6792 of 7/8/2020, the government declared a state of emergency in Beirut for two weeks, which was extended until 18/9/2020 under Decree No. 6881 of 08/18/2020. Moreover, security forces used violence to suppress the mass protests that took place on August 8, 2020 through the heavy use of tear gas and rubber bullets. Some protesters were arrested, beaten, insulted, and blindfolded, and several journalists and activists were brought in for questioning over comments on social media criticizing the authorities.

In a speech addressed to the Lebanese public on August 8, 2020, PM Hassan Diab<sup>4</sup> announced his intention to submit a draft law to the Council of Ministers in order to shorten Parliament's term and hold early parliamentary elections. This position infuriated Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, who convened a session to withdraw confidence from the cabinet, blaming it for negligence and demanding its resignation.

Indeed, four ministers resigned, and media reports stated that other ministers were determined to resign. Diab realized that his government had lost the trust of the za'ims that had formed it, prompting him to announce his resignation on August 10, 2020, before he could submit his proposal of holding early parliamentary elections to the Council of Ministers.

Lebanon was governed by a caretaker government for over a year due to the lack of consensus among the various pillars of the patronage regime on a new cabinet formation. After Ambassador Mustafa Adib, who was nominated to form the new cabinet, stepped down on September 26, 2020, Saad Hariri was once again nominated as Prime Minister designate. However, he also stepped down on July 17, 2021 after nine months of deliberations in an attempt to reach a cabinet formation accepted by all parties.

Eventually, PM Najib Mikati succeeded in forming a cabinet on September 10, 2021, which included representatives of most za'ims. The Future Movement and the Lebanese Forces continued to boycott the cabinet formation process. The ministerial statement presented by the new cabinet before Parliament stated: "Emphasizing the need to ensure the proper functioning of the democratic process in Lebanon, and stemming from its belief that any rescue plan should be based on voters' freedom to choose their representatives, the cabinet affirms its commitment to holding parliamentary elections on their scheduled date, as well as the municipal and local mayor elections. Upon gaining the vote of confidence, the cabinet will strive to take all the measures stipulated in the Electoral Law to organize the elections, ensure their integrity and transparency, and guarantee their success."

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<sup>4</sup> His cabinet was formed on January 21, 2020 after the resignation of Saad Hariri's cabinet on 29/10/2019, following the eruption of the October 17 uprising. Unlike Hariri's cabinet, which included representatives of all leaders, only ministers representing a part of the patronage regime participated in Hassan Diab's cabinet (Hezbollah, Amal Movement, FPM), while the others decided to boycott (Future Movement, LF).

After the cabinet received the vote of confidence, Decree No. 8590 was issued on December 29, 2021. Article 1 thereof called upon eligible voters residing in Lebanon to elect members of Parliament on May 15, 2022 and scheduled the expatriate vote to take place on May 6 and 8, depending on the weekly holiday in each country.

It should be noted that this decree was issued following a political conflict between the President of the Republic and the parliamentary majority over the date of the elections. On October 19, 2021, Parliament enacted a law that introduced technical amendments to the Electoral Law of 2017 (to be discussed in the next section) with the aim of shortening the deadlines and moving the elections closer. The rationale was that the joint parliamentary committees recommended that "the cabinet set March 27, 2022 as the date for holding the parliamentary elections."

The President returned the aforementioned law to Parliament by virtue of Decree No. 8421 of October 22, 2021. He considered that Parliament violated the principle of separation of powers by setting the date for the elections. The decree stated that "in the event that a draft ordinary decree setting the date of the next parliamentary elections on March 27, 2022 is issued, the President of the Republic shall not sign it, given the risk of low voter turnout due to prevalent natural and weather conditions in March (rain, thunderstorms and snow), especially in mountainous and remote regions. This would prevent voters from reaching polling stations in those regions, not to mention the additional mobility costs and the inability to supply the polling stations with grid electricity or generators due to the same factors. In addition to the above, there is nothing preventing the electoral process from taking place on May 8 or 15, 2022, which is within the constitutional deadline. These dates also guarantee better weather and logistical conditions, which would facilitate the electoral process."

Some interpreted the President's insistence on delaying the date of the elections as much as possible by his desire to grant the political group he supports – the Free Patriotic Movement headed by MP Gebran Bassil – sufficient time to prepare, in the hope of gaining some additional votes following the alleged sharp decline of its popularity. Indeed, the President only signed the decree calling upon the electorate to vote in May, as previously mentioned.

Given that the elections require special expenses to be allocated in the annual state budget, and considering that Parliament has yet to endorse the 2021 budget, and after substantial delays that increased the doubts regarding the seriousness and possibility of holding the elections, the cabinet submitted a draft law that aims to open an exceptional line of credit at a value of LBP 260 billion for the benefit of the Directorate-General of Political Affairs and Refugees and LBP 60 billion for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to fund elections abroad, i.e. a total of LBP 320 billion. This law was issued upon its endorsement on April 7, 2022. Article 4 stipulated that these amounts shall be covered by the increase in the estimation of extraordinary revenues in the budget of 2022, through loans contracted by the state for the benefit of the treasury – that is, by having the Banque du Liban print more Lebanese pounds.

# SECOND: LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

The first part of this section gives a brief historical overview of the electoral laws adopted in Lebanon after its independence, while the subsequent parts address the amendments introduced to the electoral law currently in force.

## HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

After gaining its independence in 1943, Lebanon witnessed a state of legislative instability in the texts that govern parliamentary elections, as the electoral law was amended at before every election. However, all of these texts maintained the major characteristics of the electoral system adopted during the French Mandate since the first Lebanese parliamentary elections in 1922. These characteristics can be summarized as follows: majoritarian representation, sectarian distribution of seats, and unity of the electorate; i.e. voters from all sects vote for all candidates from different sects.

To be sure, the main difference between all the electoral laws after 1943 was related to the size of electoral constituencies, which varied based on the interests of the ruling powers but mostly included multiple seats. The parliamentary elections of 1947 were held in accordance with the provisions of

Decision No. 2 issued by the French High Commissioner on January 2, 1934 along with its amendments introduced in 1943. The Parliament was composed of 55 members distributed across the governorates. In 1950, a new law was passed, according to which the 1951 elections took place. It increased the number of MPs to 77 and maintained the governorate as an electoral constituency in Beirut, Bekaa and the South, while the qaza (administrative district) was adopted as electoral constituency in Mount Lebanon and North Lebanon. President Camille Chamoun adopted the same approach, introducing amendments<sup>5</sup> to the 1950 law, whereby the number of MPs was decreased to 44, and Lebanon was divided into 33 small electoral constituencies including maximum two seats, with the aim of weakening his opponents and scattering their forces. This was also the case in the 1957 elections, when President Chamoun once again rearranged the constituencies, establishing 27 constituencies while increasing the number of MPs to 66. The electoral law remained volatile until the era of President Fouad Chehab, with the issuance of a new electoral law on April 26, 1960, increasing the number of MPs to 99 and adopting the qaza as an electoral constituency across Lebanon. The parliamentary elections of 1960, 1964, 1968, and 1972 were held in accordance with this law.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Other major amendments included granting women who hold a primary education certificate the right to vote (Article 21) as well as making voting mandatory (Article 23).

<sup>6</sup> It seems that the Lebanese parliamentary elections by the mid-sixties became more competitive and reflective of the actual trends in public opinion, which can be analyzed as follows: "The degree of competition has increased sharply from the uncompetitive level of 1947. Since 1951, the percentage of votes going to the winner has hovered around a competitive 60 per cent. At the same time the percentage of competitive contests has increased steadily. Since all regions and all sects over five elections exhibit consistent competitiveness, one may conclude that it has been institutionalized. This in turn supports the basic argument that the electoral mechanism has facilitated the operation of the balance of power in Lebanese politics. It suggests that the mechanism has succeeded remarkably well in maintaining equilibrium of local forces in all parts of the state." (Michael C. Hudson, *The Electoral Process and Political Development in Lebanon*, Middle East Journal, Spring, 1966, Vol. 20, No. 2 (Spring, 1966), p. 185).

## COMPOSITION OF THE LEBANESE PARLIAMENT (1943-2022)

Year	Number of Parliament Seats	Number of Constituencies <sup>7</sup>
1943-1947	55	5
1951	77	9
1953	44	33
1957	66	27
1960-1964-1968-1972	99	26
1992	128	12
1996	128	10
2000	128	14
2005	128	26
2009	128	26
2018-2022	128	15

The electoral system also witnessed a period of instability after the end of the civil war in 1990. Although the number of MPs remained stable at 128<sup>8</sup> throughout this period, the division of constituencies differed during the parliamentary elections that took place in 1992, 1996 and 2000, as a new law to elect members of Parliament was adopted a few months prior to every election. The only exception was during the elections of 2005, which were held under exceptional circumstances after the assassination of former PM Rafik Hariri and the withdrawal of the Syrian Army from Lebanon. The pillars of the regime faced international pressure to hold the elections pursuant to the same law of the 2000 elections.

As for the 2009 elections, they were held pursuant to Law No. 25 of October 8, 2008, which was enacted after a phase of internal armed violence among the za'ims, who reached an agreement in Doha on May 21, 2008. This agreement led to the adoption of the qaza as an electoral constituency

pursuant to the law of 1960, while the Marjayoun-Hasbaya, Baalbek-Hermel, and West Bekaa-Rashaya regions each constituted one electoral constituency, whereas Beirut was divided into three electoral constituencies.

The elections of May 2022 were held in accordance with the same electoral law adopted during the 2018 elections, i.e. Law No. 44 issued on June 17, 2017. This law was endorsed by the various parties of the patronage regime after the presidential settlement between Saad Hariri and Michel Aoun, which led to the election of the latter as president, ending the presidential vacuum that had lasted from May 2014 to October 31, 2016.

Law No. 44 was a significant development in Lebanon's political life, as it introduced proportional representation for the first time, albeit in a distorted form that undermined its very essence according to the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE),

<sup>7</sup> The data is retrieved from Nohlen et al., *Elections in Asia and the Pacific: A Data Handbook*, vol.1, p.175-176; Zein El Dine, *11 Electoral Laws in Lebanon over 76 Years*, <https://bit.ly/3B2gvoq>; Elections.gov.lb (Parliamentary results 2005: <https://bit.ly/3zg4Hxq> and 2009: <https://bit.ly/3PI8rDv>).

<sup>8</sup> Contrary to the National Accord Document, which increased the number of MPs to 108 only.

after decades of majoritarian representation since the issuance of Decision No. 1307 on March 10, 1922 by acting High French Commissioner Robert de Caix, on the basis of which the first Lebanese parliamentary elections in their modern sense were held in 1922. Some technical amendments were introduced to this law in November 2021, which we will discuss in form and substance in the subsequent parts of this report. We should note, however, that these amendments did not change the essence of the law.

## **CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES RELATED TO THE AMENDMENT OF LAW NO. 44**

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On October 19, 2021, Parliament enacted a law introducing amendments to Electoral Law No. 44 of 2017. This was done amid a complete lack of transparency, without any coordination with relevant civil society organizations and without disclosing deliberations and discussions related to the amendments to public opinion. It was particularly striking that these amendments failed to address many of the loopholes, errors and contradictions in the law, in addition to maintaining the ambiguity and vagueness of certain articles.

These amendments shortened the deadline for the submission of candidate lists and suspended some provisions on the elections of non-resident Lebanese nationals, in addition to other amendments that we will discuss below.

The President of the Republic rejected the abovementioned amendments and decided not to issue the law. He returned the law to Parliament for review, pursuant to Article 57 of the Constitution, which requires Parliament to re-discuss any law returned by the President and approve it by the absolute majority of MPs. In the event that Parliament fails to promulgate the law by an absolute majority, the President shall not be required to issue the law, and therefore these amendments become inoperative.

On October 28, 2021, Parliament issued the law returned by the President, introducing additional amendments. This process lacked transparency, and the amended provisions and the reasons for those amendments were not disclosed to public opinion.

However, Parliament adopted an unusual method in calculating the absolute majority in order to issue the law. Instead of the customary absolute majority of 65 MPs out of 128, a majority of 59 MPs out of 117 was adopted, based on an interpretation by the Speaker of Parliament. The latter relied in calculation on the number of incumbent MPs, without taking into account deceased MPs or those who had resigned after the Beirut Port explosion.

The President refused to approve the law, considering that its method of issuance was unconstitutional. After the time limit for issuing expedited laws (five days) expired, the law was considered legally effective based on the last paragraph of Article 57 of the Constitution, and it was published in Annex No. 43 of the Official Gazette on 3/11/2021 (Law No. 8 issued on 3/11/2021).

On November 17, 2021, ten MPs from the "Strong Lebanon Bloc," loyal to the President of the Republic, filed an appeal before the Constitutional Council to repeal this law and revoke the new amendments. The Constitutional Council was supposed to determine the calculation method for the absolute majority when examining the appeal. However, due to political interference, it failed to reach a decision because it did not secure the required quorum of seven members within the legal period that expired on 12/21/2021. Subsequently, the Constitutional Council issued a minutes, which concluded that the challenged law is effective (Minutes No. 2/2021 of 12/21/2021, published in Issue No. 51 of the Official Gazette dated 12/23/2021).

In light of the above, the elections of May 15, 2022 were held in accordance with a law whose constitutionality was challenged, not to mention that the Constitutional Council

failed to reach a decision on the appeal due to the political conflict between the President of the Republic and the Speaker of Parliament. In fact, it was obvious that there some members were subject to political pressure to prevent the Council from issuing a decision within the legal deadlines. What exacerbates the seriousness of this incident is that the Constitutional Council itself is entrusted with deciding on the electoral appeals that submitted after the parliamentary elections. This casts serious doubts regarding the Council's independence and its ability to decide on such complex issues without being subjected to interventions by the political forces in power.

## **AMENDMENTS TO LAW NO. 44**

Law No. 8 introduced a set of amendments to the applicable Electoral Law. These amendments did not aim to change the electoral system, whose major features were maintained: Neither the proportional representation aspect nor the calculation method to determine the winning candidate were modified. The division of electoral constituencies in Lebanon was not modified either. However, this does not mean that amendments were trivial, as they mostly had hidden political motivations or reflected the political authority's conception of the nature of the parliamentary representation in Lebanon. Therefore, it necessary to shed light on the nature of these amendments in general and discuss each of them separately.

### **EXCEPTIONAL AND CIRCUMSTANTIAL AMENDMENTS**

After reviewing its provisions, it appears that Articles 1 and 3 stipulate that the law is effective "exceptionally and for one time only in order to hold parliamentary elections exclusively after the issuance of this law." This means that the law is of exceptional and circumstantial nature, as its provisions are effective only once for the parliamentary elections scheduled for 2022.

The rationale behind this law did not justify its exceptional nature, as it was only stated that the law should be enacted "to facilitate the parliamentary elections scheduled for 2022," without explaining the exceptional circumstances that allow the suspension of many of its provisions or why only specific provisions were suspended. This means that the law is also discretionary. In addition, the law was issued shortly ahead of the elections, meaning that it led to the amendment of the existing legal framework according to which the upcoming elections were expected to take place without any justification. This could constitute a violation of the principle of legislative integrity and jeopardize the credibility of the electoral process, since the final results will be affected by these amendments.

While looking into the constitutionality of another law on the suspension of deadlines related to the Electoral Law, the Constitutional Council had previously stated that "the legislator may repeal or amend the law or suspend some of its provisions." However, it added that this shall be done "in light of objective information, provided that this is not in violation of the Constitution and other principles of constitutional value" (Decision No. 1 of May 13, 2013). Considering that Parliament did not clarify the objective information when issuing such exceptional provisions, and given that the Constitutional Council failed to examine the constitutionality of the said law, the discretionary nature of these amendments and the potential political motives behind them are cause for legitimate suspicion regarding the intention of the political authority that made those amendments.

### **SHORTENING OF DEADLINES**

The law shortened the deadlines related to the submission of voter lists, which the Civil Status Registry offices, Judicial Record Department and courts should abide by ahead of their publication, circulation, and announcement in the media. These lists should be rectified and frozen on February 1,

2022. The deadlines shall remain valid until March 30, 2023 and shall be adopted in any upcoming parliamentary elections between February 1, 2022 and February 1, 2023. The original text of Article 35 stipulated that the lists shall be frozen on March 30.

The President of the Republic objected to these provisions, stating in the decree in which he requested the reconsideration of the amendments that “they deprive 10,685 citizens from all sects, who would reach the age of 21 between February 1 and March 30, 2022, of the right to vote.” However, this objection was no longer valid, since the amended text of Article 32 of the law enacted by Parliament, after the President had returned it, stipulates that the Directorate-General of Personal Status shall also send “copies of eligible voter lists who will reach the age of 21 on the upcoming Election Day” to municipalities, local mayors, and governorate and district centers no later than December 15, 2021, so that voters may view them and request their correction as necessary.

The law also shortened the deadline within which Lebanese embassies are required to send the lists of eligible voters to competent authorities. The new deadline was set for December 1, 2021, while in the old text of Article 113 it was December 20.

### **SUSPENDING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PARLIAMENTARY SEATS ALLOCATED FOR NON-RESIDENT CITIZENS**

Article 2 of the law stipulated a one-time and exceptional suspension of Articles 121 and 122, which required the establishment of an electoral constituency for expatriates and the addition of “six seats to the current number of MPs, increasing the total number to 134 MPs in the elections that will follow the first elections held in accordance with this law.” Hence, expatriates who chose to exercise their right to vote abroad now vote for candidates running in electoral constituencies within Lebanon.

This amendment triggered widespread controversy. The President of the Republic rejected it, stating in the decree in which he requested its reconsideration that it prevents expatriates from “exercising their political right preserved in the current electoral law by voting for direct representatives in the electoral constituency allocated for non-residents.” He also added that “when enacting a law regarding basic rights and freedoms, such as the right to vote, the legislator cannot amend or abolish the legal texts in force that guarantee these rights and freedoms without replacing them with texts that provide additional or equivalent guarantees. By failing to do so, the legislator would be undermining the guarantees that they had endorsed under previous laws on fundamental rights or freedoms, whether by abolishing these guarantees without enacting alternative ones, or by substituting them with lesser guarantees.”

Some believe the President sought to restrict the votes of non-resident Lebanese citizens to the six seats previously allocated to them in order to diminish the effectiveness of their votes inside Lebanon. Under the new amendment, their votes are distributed across electoral constituencies in all Lebanese regions, which enables them to impact the vote for a number of seats exceeding those allocated exclusively for the expatriate constituency.

### **SUSPENDING THE ADOPTION OF THE MAGNETIC VOTING CARD AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MEGA CENTERS**

The law once again suspended Article 84, which requires the government to “take the necessary measures to approve the use of the electronic magnetic card in the next elections.” This article was previously suspended pursuant to Law No. 67 issued on 13/4/2018, whose single article stated: “The provisions of Article 84 of Law No. 44 dated 06/17/2017 (on the Election of Members of Parliament) shall be suspended for one time, in the parliamentary elections scheduled

for May 2018.” At the time, the government justified this suspension by claiming that it failed to issue the magnetic card in time for the elections. However, this article was also suspended in the May 2022 elections by virtue of the one-time and exceptional amendments introduced by Parliament to the Electoral Law.

Moreover, the government also failed to enable citizens to vote at mega polling centers across Lebanon. These centers would allow citizens to vote in their area of residence without the need to go to the electoral constituencies where they are registered.

Mega centers are an important step towards reform, as they would allow voters who do not wish to return to their electoral constituencies in order to exercise their right to vote, for fear of being pressured by influential political forces, to vote freely and avoid contact with supporters of political parties. Mega centers also constitute a solution for citizens who may refrain from voting due to the high cost of transportation that would prevent them from going to their villages, which are far from their areas of residence, especially in light of the significant increase in fuel prices in Lebanon over the past months, the devaluation of the Lebanese pound, and the loss of purchasing power.

It should be noted that linking the establishment of mega centers to the magnetic card entails certain risks, as the adoption of a specific voting card other than the ID (which is, in principle, accessible to all citizens) may contribute to pressuring voters and limiting their freedom, as it would grant influential political parties the ability to sway the vote by distributing the card to their supporters and withholding it from their opponents.

The President of the Republic, along with the political party supporting him (the Free Patriotic Movement), had insisted on establishing mega centers, but the Minister of Interior drafted a report in March 2022 stating that it is impossible to implement

these reforms during the short period ahead of the elections. He explained that this would have required up to 5 months and an amendment to the Electoral Law, which did not explicitly provide for the establishment of mega polling centers, in addition to the financial cost amounting to USD 5.8 million, which is difficult to provide in the current circumstances. Therefore, on March 10, 2022, the Council of Ministers endorsed “a draft law aimed at amending the electoral law to allow the adoption of the magnetic card and mega centers in the next parliamentary elections of 2026.” This basically meant that the government decided to postpone these measures and not to implement them in the elections of May 2022.

The actual controversy posed by the issue of mega centers lies in linking the right to vote to the registered area of residence, which has become a constant feature of the various electoral laws in Lebanon, with the exception of those adopted during the French Mandate. Article 26 of Decision No. 1307 of March 10, 1922 stipulates that: “Voter lists shall include the names of all Greater Lebanon citizens who have reached the age of 21 full years [...] and who have been residing in an administratively independent city or administrative district for at least six months. Such citizens may exercise their electoral rights in their area of residence.” In other words, this article linked the right to vote to the actual place of residence. In fact, the same article adds that this principle must be adopted at every election that follows a general census of the population, during which the modifications that occurred to the population shall be recorded, including, of course, their new place of residence in case they moved from one place to another between the old and new census.

The linking of political rights to citizens’ actual place of residence and the freedom to change one’s place of residence were explicitly enshrined in Decision No. 2851 issued by the Governor of Greater Lebanon on January 2, 1924 on the registration of personal status documents. Article 40 of the said decision stipulates the following:

“Any person who wishes to leave the place of residence where their name is registered in the census records to reside permanently in a different region shall submit a relevant statement in this regard to the Personal Status Registry in the locality they wish to reside in within six months from the date of their arrival thereto. This statement may be submitted directly or through the local mayor.” Additionally, this article stipulates that people who fail to rectify their place of residence at official registries shall be subject to penalties ranging from a fine to imprisonment.

This was also affirmed in the electoral law issued by the High Commissioner by virtue of Decision No. 2 of January 2, 1934, Article 24 of which stipulated the following: “Voter lists shall include the names of all Lebanese citizens who have reached the age of 21 full years [...] and who have been residing in an administratively independent city or administrative district for at least six months.” This text was repeated almost verbatim in the electoral laws issued in 1950, 1952, and 1957.

In line with these principles, a new law was issued on December 7, 1951 regarding the registration of personal status documents. Article 40 of this law stipulated the following: “Any person who leaves the place of residence where their name is registered to reside permanently in a different region may not transfer their name to this new place unless after six months of permanently residing there. They shall submit a request in this regard to the Statistics and Personal Status Registry in the locality they wish to move to, along with a statement from the loyal mayor of that locality certifying their residence therein for at least six months.” This text is more lenient than the decision of the Governor of Greater Lebanon of 1924, which made the rectification of records in the event of a change of the place of residence a mandatory requirement for individuals. The new text, however, gives the concerned individual the freedom to do so, provided that they submit their request six months after moving to a new locality.

However, before holding the 1964 parliamentary elections, the government resorted to Article 58 of the Constitution, which allows it to put into effect every expedited bill that Parliament did not issue within forty days from the date of its referral. As such, the government issued Decree No. 15738 of March 11, 1964, which put into effect a bill sent to Parliament in 1962 on revoking Article 40 of the 1951 Law and replacing it with the following text: “Any person who leaves the place of residence where their name is registered to reside permanently in a different place may not transfer their name to this new place unless after three years of permanent residence there. They shall submit a statement signed by the local mayor and two witnesses to the Personal Status Registry in the locality or village they wish to move to. An investigation shall be carried out by the police or gendarmerie to verify such residence. The government may reject this request when necessary.”

Thus, the right to change one’s place of residence and the exercise of political and electoral rights in the new locality became subject to strict conditions and to the government’s discretion. This basically detached citizens from their actual place of residence and linked them solely to their registered place of residence according to the 1921 census and the 1932 census, i.e. the last official census carried out in Lebanon. This legal link between citizens and their registered place of residence no doubt restricts their freedom, as the registered place residence becomes a space dominated by a group of influential politicians who control people’s votes. Moreover, it perpetuates the sectarian nature of Lebanese villages and towns, as “alien” residents are denied the right to participate in municipal elections in their place of residence, forcing them to return to their “original” village to exercise the right to vote, where it is easier to classify and control them.

All the subsequent electoral laws maintained this separation between the actual place of residence and the official registered place of residence, denying citizens their right to vote

except in the electoral constituency where they are registered in the personal status records, even if they had left that locality many years prior. Therefore, the magnetic card and mega centers do not change this electoral reality, which has become a constant feature of the Lebanese political regime in order to maintain the political and sectarian balance in the country. Without additional legal amendments, the magnetic card and mega centers vote only enable voters to elect candidates running in their original constituency but without having to physically go there to exercise their right to vote.

### **INCREASING THE NOMINATION FEE**

The new law introduced an amendment raising the nomination fee that each candidate for the elections must pay from LBP 8,000,000 to LBP 30,000,000. This amendment certainly reflects the ruling political authority's perception of the nature of parliamentary representation. The fact that a nomination fee is imposed in the first place, in addition to increasing its value to this extent, are reflective of the widespread view that parliamentary representation is a "benefit" to be paid for by those who wish to acquire it. The nomination fee is also a means of class separation between wealthy social groups and the low-income groups. When membership of Parliament is viewed as a privilege monopolized by the country's wealthy elite, nomination becomes a means to achieve or maintain social prestige within the class hierarchy that the political regime seeks to reproduce and preserve.

The devaluation of the Lebanese pound does not justify the increase of the nomination fee, as those who are capable of paying such an amount from their private funds belong to a minority of people who have access to foreign currencies and who are not actually affected by the economic collapse. Meanwhile, political forces and candidates with limited financial resources will find it difficult to pay the nomination fee, which not only constitutes a barrier at the

individual level, but also limits the possibility of organized collective action by submitting nominations across Lebanon rather than in one constituency.

It should be noted that the 2008 Electoral Law stipulated that the nomination fee shall be refunded in case the candidate withdrew their nomination, won the elections, or received 20% of votes. By contrast, the current law does not mention any refund, which means that the fees paid by the candidate cannot be reclaimed. This no doubt exacerbates the disparity between candidates, as some have modest financial capabilities and may be reluctant to proceed with their nomination, knowing in advance that they will not be able to recover the money they paid.

### **RAISING THE CAMPAIGN SPENDING LIMIT**

Law No. 8, which is directly enforceable, introduced amendments to Article 61 of the 2017 Parliamentary Elections Law No. 44, setting the legal campaign spending limit for each candidate. This limit was specified in the old article according to the following:

- A fixed lump sum of LBP 150,000,000 per candidate.
- A fixed lump sum for the list, amounting to LBP 150,000,000 per candidate.
- A variable sum of LBP 5,000 for each voter registered in the voter lists in the major constituency.

The amended article adjusted the campaign spending limit as follows:

- A fixed lump sum of LBP 750,000,000 per candidate.
- A fixed lump sum for the list, amounting to LBP 750,000,000 per candidate.
- A variable sum of LBP 50,000 for each voter registered in the voter lists in the major constituency.

It is no secret that the legal campaign spending limit was raised due to the devaluation of the Lebanese pound.

However, the Law does not explain why this new limit was adopted, nor does it present any scientific justification for raising the limit to this extent. This new, arbitrary spending limit is also unfair, since traditional political forces will no doubt make maximum use of it given their massive financial capabilities – assuming that they will actually abide by this limit and not exceed it. The majority of emerging powers, meanwhile, will not be able to spend as much as the law allows due to their limited financial resources., which undermines the principle of equal opportunities among candidates.

Another inadequate feature of this Law is that no amendments were made to the fines related to the campaign spending limit and the media, as stipulated in Articles 66 and 81. These fines no longer act as a deterrent, due to their modest value given the devaluation of the Lebanese pound, which encourages political forces to violate the Law, particularly wealthy candidates and lists supported by parties that have great financial capabilities.

### **APPOINTING REGISTRATION COMMITTEES AND DETERMINING POLLING STATIONS FOR EXPATRIATES**

An important amendment to Article 40 of the Law affected the mechanism for appointing the higher and preliminary registration committees. The previous text required the issuance of an ordinary appointment decree by the President of the Republic, while the new text transferred that power to the Minister of Interior.

The same applies to determining polling stations for expatriate Lebanese nationals: The old text of Article 116 stipulated that this should be done by virtue of a decree issued by the Council of Ministers, while the new text transfers this power to the Minister of Interior after coordination with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants.<sup>9</sup>

These amendments were no doubt made for political reasons that can only be understood in light of the political conflict that erupted between the President of the Republic and the Speaker of Parliament over the amendment of the Electoral Law on the one hand, and the disruption of cabinet sessions due to the disagreement between the za'ims on the judicial investigation into the Beirut Port explosion and the role of the judicial investigator in this case. The cabinet failed to meet from October 12, 2021 to January 24, 2022, which means that the amendments to the Electoral Law were issued during the disruption. Therefore, the transfer of the power to appoint registration committees and determine polling stations was a political maneuver to limit the role of the President of the Republic and guarantee that the disruption of cabinet sessions would not have an impact on the electoral process.

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<sup>9</sup> The Minister of Interior issued Decision No. 325 on 7/4/2022, specifying polling stations in foreign countries in which Lebanese citizens will vote.

# THIRD: POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ELECTIONS

In light of the above, it is necessary to define the significance of the elections within the political context in Lebanon and the actual purpose of the electoral process in light of the control of the patronage regime over the Lebanese state and its institutions. This section will attempt to clarify this significance by analyzing the political and social context in which the elections took place and revealing how the Electoral Law serves the interests of traditional forces and enhances their grip over society.

## ELECTIONS AS AN EXCEPTIONAL EVENT

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Elections in democratic countries are the means that allow the peaceful transfer of power, as their aim is to regulate political competition within legal frameworks that protect the freedom of citizens and guarantee their right to express their opinion and choose their representatives without any form of physical, social, or psychological violence.

However, elections in Lebanon, especially after 1990, have been taking place in an atmosphere of intimidation created by the various pillars of the political regime. Instead of being the normal democratic means through which the people exercise their sovereignty in accordance with the provisions of Paragraph "d" of the preamble to the Constitution, elections have become an exceptional event, portrayed as a critical phase that everyone must navigate with vigilance and caution.

Thus, elections in Lebanon have mutated from an important but ordinary national event that is expected and subject to the existing constitutional order, into a serious threat to civil peace that should be dealt with while minimizing risks and damages. The high level of apprehension that accompanies the electoral process, and the Lebanese people's fear that the situation will devolve into armed violence between the za'ims of sectarian parties, reveal the reality of elections in Lebanon: an exceptional event that may threaten the existing political balance established between the traditional ruling parties. Therefore, the only solution to avert the imminent danger is to re-elect the same pillars of the patronage regime and renew their legitimacy.

This is evident in the public discourse of sectarian parties, which frequently use terms such as national unity, partnership, reconciliation, and consensus. These are symbolic expressions that in fact indicate the opposite. That is, they aim to remind the Lebanese public of the civil war period in order to keep them in a state of apprehension, as well as to intimidate them with the threat of returning to armed militia violence – the same militias that were transformed into political parties after 1990, took control of state institutions, and divided them into protectorates under their exclusive influence.

Rather than promoting citizens' freedoms and defending their economic and social rights, especially in light of the unprecedented collapse in Lebanon, the electoral discourse of the parties in power largely focused

on conflicting issues related to identity, fear for one's future, the need to confront the conspiracy, or the fact that elections are a form of character assassination or a foreign war that requires the mobilization of all resources and capacities, without considering the daily affairs that concern ordinary citizens.

This heightened incendiary discourse led to increasing acts of violence in society, the most dangerous of which was the armed clash that erupted on October 14, 2021 in Tayyouneh between supporters of the Lebanese Forces, on the one hand, and followers of Hezbollah and Amal Movement, on the other. This clash resulted in the death of seven people and had major repercussions, as it took on a sectarian character that strengthens the control of the za'ims and solidifies their image as defenders of their communities.

In the wake of these incidents, Law No. 285 of April 12, 2022, which extended the mandate of municipal and mayoral councils until May 31, 2023. By issuing this law, the cabinet violated its own ministerial statement, in which it pledged to hold the municipal elections on time. The cabinet justified this one-year postponement by claiming that the municipal elections, if they are held, will coincide with the parliamentary elections. According to the cabinet, this could be done due to "several logistical and financial factors, the lack of resources, and the devaluation of the national currency." Consequently, political forces have repeatedly invoked the economic crisis, which they are responsible for and which they have failed to confront, in order to undermine the rights of citizens, in violation of an explicit decision by the Constitutional Council which states as follows:

"Given that elections are the ultimate expression of democracy, through which people manifest their sovereignty by electing their representatives, considering that the people are the source of authority

from which state institutions derive their constitutional legitimacy;

Given that democracy is not only political, whereby people participate in government through their representatives and in managing national affairs, but also takes an administrative aspect, whereby local communities participate in managing their own affairs through elected councils;

Given that the right to vote and, consequently, the right of citizens to elect and be elected, is a constitutional right which embodies the democratic principle upon which the constitutional order in Lebanon is based and has the same value if it is exercised at the level of the parliamentary elections or local elections."<sup>10</sup>

The rationale behind the law extending the mandate of municipal councils constitutes a clear violation of the Constitutional Council's decision, as it established a hierarchy between elections since by considering that parliamentary elections "take precedence over any other elections." By contrast, the Constitutional Council's decision explicitly considers that both parliamentary and local elections have the same constitutional value.

Moreover, the simple fact that the parliamentary elections were held means that there are no exceptional circumstances that justify the postponement of any other elections. This issue was clearly raised by the Constitutional Council in its aforementioned decision, where it considered that the law extending the mandate of municipal councils, approved in 1997, "was not justified by any exceptional circumstances, and no exceptional circumstances can in any event justify it. This is evidenced by the fact that the government held parliamentary elections in 1992 and 1996 and by-elections in 1994 and 1997. As such, this extension disrupted the constitutional principle of periodic elections and deprived voters of exercising their right to vote [...]. It also prevented the right of local communities to manage their own

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<sup>10</sup> Decision No. 1 issued on 12/9/1997.

affairs freely by applying the democratic concept stipulated in the preamble to the Constitution.”<sup>11</sup>

In this context, LADE and 30 other rights institutions and associations had held a press conference on March 22, 2022, warning against the postponement of the municipal elections. In addition, LADE and 46 other institutions, associations and groups organized a protest as Parliament was issuing the law extending the mandate of municipal and mayoral councils on March 29, 2022. LADE also issued a statement rejecting the “extension of the mandate of local councils and the violation of the rights of municipalities and their decentralized role in securing and facilitating the work and living conditions of their residents.”<sup>12</sup>

Although the political forces in power stressed the importance of respecting the constitutional obligation to hold parliamentary elections in the rationale behind the law extending the mandate of municipal and mayoral councils, they backtracked on their previous commitments by violating Article 41 of the Constitution and refusing to hold the parliamentary by-elections within the constitutional deadlines. The Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers addressed a letter to the Ministry of Interior on September 10, 2020, informing it that the President of the Republic, in agreement with the Prime Minister, gave the exceptional approval to postpone the by-elections that should have taken place to fill the vacant seats in Parliament due to the resignation of several MPs following the Beirut Port explosion, which took effect on August 13, 2020. This postponement was justified by the exceptional circumstances in Beirut after the declaration of a state of

emergency, keeping in mind that the lifting of the state of emergency and the vacancy of additional parliamentary seats did not prevent the government from continuing to violate the Constitution by refusing to hold by-elections.

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ELECTIONS AMID THE CURRENT POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SITUATION**

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The May 2022 elections took place amid an economic and social collapse never before seen in Lebanon, except during World War I (1914-1918) and at the end of 1980s. This reality can be summed up in the following points:

- Continuous devaluation of the Lebanese pound from LBP 1,500 to the dollar to LBP 38,000 to the dollar.
- Deterioration of the Lebanese people’s purchasing power and the significant increase in unemployment and poverty rates.
- Arbitrary withholding of deposits by banks, their default on payment, and the transformation of banks from a service-oriented sector to institutions having discretionary power.
- Adoption by Banque du Liban of a policy of multiple exchange rates in order to minimize banks’ losses.
- Gradual collapse of various public services and amenities.
- Near-total power outage.
- Rise in the prices of consumer goods and medicine, coupled with a shortage in these commodities and the emergence of monopolistic practices that the government was unable to control.

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<sup>11</sup> In the same sense: “Postponement of scheduled elections necessitated by public emergency may be permitted in certain limited circumstances, but only if and to the extent strictly required by the exigencies of the situation. Any such extraordinary measures must comply with all the rigid international standards for such derogations and must not threaten democracy itself (...) accordingly, the interruption of periodicity will, in all but the most exceptional situations, violate international standards.” (Center for Human Rights, Geneva, Professional Training Series No. 2, Human Rights and Elections, a Handbook on the Legal, Technical and Human Rights Aspects of Elections, United Nations, New York and Geneva, 1994, p. 11).

<sup>12</sup> LADE, When there’s a will, there’s a way: Parliamentary and municipal elections should be held on time, March 22, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3v8fHKY>.

- Significant increase in fuel prices and the loss of mobility for many Lebanese.

All of these factors combined aggravated the vulnerability of Lebanese society. The government has failed to adopt real measures that would protect its citizens from arbitrary practices by banks, such as the issuance of a capital control law to prevent financial transfers abroad and regulate cash withdrawals according to clear criteria. The multiplicity of exchange rates and the massive discrepancies between Lebanese citizens who receive an income in U.S. dollars and those whose income in Lebanese pounds have undermined social solidarity and created divergent interests that lead to the fragmentation of society and leave it vulnerable to the arbitrary practices of banks and political powers.

Amid this reality, and despite the preparations, many doubted whether the elections will take place. Until a few weeks before the election date, and even after the issuance of a decree calling upon the electorate to vote, the majority of people doubt whether the elections would take place. This reveals the lack of trust in the political regime supervising the electoral process, as it had previously canceled the parliamentary elections that were supposed to take place in 2013 and postponed them for three consecutive times until 2018, after the presidential settlement and after the za'ims of the patronage regime made all necessary arrangements.

Despite the major events that have taken place in Lebanon in recent years, there has also been a generalized state of indifference. Many expressed their desire to boycott the elections because they did not believe in the possibility of real change, since the ruling

political authorities would not hold elections unless they are certain that they will win.<sup>13</sup> Thus, the elections that took place in May 2022 have violated the primary purpose of the principle of periodic elections, enshrined in the interpretation<sup>14</sup> of the Constitutional Council and the international conventions to which Lebanon is committed, as mentioned in the preamble to its Constitution, especially the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related international covenants.

Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights explicitly stipulates that "Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives," and that "The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage."

Paragraph (b) of Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which was approved by the United Nations General Assembly on December 16, 1966, stipulates that every citizen, without any discrimination, shall have the opportunity to "to vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors."

The United Nations Human Rights Committee has explained this principle according to the following: "Genuine periodic elections in accordance with paragraph (b) are essential to ensure the accountability of representatives for the exercise of the legislative or executive powers vested in them. Such elections must be held at intervals which are not unduly

<sup>13</sup> This indifference was reinforced by the results of opinion polls that have been published and circulated in the media, most of which asserted that the elections will reproduce the same political forces without any real change. We should, however, keep in mind that it is not possible to verify the credibility of these polls, as the methods they adopt are not subject to any scientific audit.

<sup>14</sup> "Whereas the right to vote, as agreed upon, scientifically and based on our jurisprudence, generates another constitutional principle, i.e. the principle of periodicity in voters' exercise of their right to vote, which entails the obligation to call upon voters to exercise their right to vote periodically and within a reasonable period" (Decision No. 1 of 12/9/1997; also "The periodicity of elections is a constitutional principle that shall never be violated" (Decision No. 7 of November 28, 2014).

long and which ensure that the authority of government continues to be based on the free expression of the will of electors. The rights and obligations provided for in paragraph (b) should be guaranteed by law.”<sup>15</sup>

Elections in Lebanon are no longer a means enabling the people, who are the source of sovereignty, to elect their political authority and hold officials accountable. Rather, they have become a means to renew the legitimacy of the ruling regime so that it continues to pursue the same clientelist and authoritarian methods through which it has subdued society over the past decades. It is similar to the pledge of allegiance (Bay’ah), defined by Ibn Khaldun as “It is as though the person who renders the oath of allegiance made a contract with his amir, to the effect that he surrenders supervision of his own affairs and those of the Muslims to him and that he will not contest his authority.” Similar to the pledge of allegiance, the recent elections will not lead to the emergence of an elected authority,<sup>16</sup> but rather to the recognition of and submission to the existing authority. In fact, it is a ritual in which voters express their loyalty to the za’im and renew the clientelist bond that unites them.

In this sense, elections are merely a means to renew the legitimacy of the patronage regime, especially when seen in their regional and international context: The patronage regime seeks to preserve its legitimacy to justify its position to external forces, so that it can negotiate with them in order to find solutions to the collapse that Lebanon is experiencing, even if these solutions are at the expense of society and the true interests of the state. Since the election of the new U.S. President Joe Biden in January 2021 and his adoption of a new international policy at odds with that of his

predecessor Donald Trump, the Middle East region is awaiting a settlement between Iran and the international community in light of the resumption of the Vienna negotiations in order to reach an agreement concerning Iran’s nuclear program. Thus, the purpose of the elections was to give the political authorities the formal democratic legitimacy it needs to secure a seat at the table in the regional settlement aimed at reorganizing the region and to justify their internal role once again.

## ELECTORAL LAW AND THE PATRONAGE REGIME

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The adoption of Law No. 44 of June 17, 2017 on the Election of Members of Parliament was an important development in Lebanon’s political history. Some considered it a major reform, as it adopted proportional representation to determine the winners for the first time since 1922. However, the limitations of this law<sup>17</sup> soon became clear after the 2018 elections, which reproduced the same political blocs that controlled the overwhelming majority of Parliament seats after the previous elections, held under the majoritarian representation system in 2009.

LADE had already issued a report<sup>18</sup> explaining the new law in detail and outlining its shortcomings. The present report will therefore not repeat these observations, because the law has not changed and it has retained all its basic characteristics. Our current report only analyzes the amendments introduced at the end of 2021, as detailed in the previous section. Still, it would be beneficial to remind the reader of the main principles underlying this law, while focusing on their political dimensions and how traditional political forces benefit from them.

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<sup>15</sup> Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 25: The right to participate in public affairs, voting rights and the right of equal access to public service, fifty-seventh session, 1996, para. 9.

<sup>16</sup> Ibn Khaldun, Prolegomena, Al-Hilal Publishing House and Library, Beirut, 1983, p. 141.

<sup>17</sup> Paradoxically, the rationale behind this Law states that the adoption of the proportional system will “allow unrepresented groups to have their representatives in Parliament.”

<sup>18</sup> Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections, Parliamentary Elections Observation Report of 2018.

## ELECTORAL CONSTITUENCY PARTITIONING

Lebanon has been divided into electoral constituencies of varying sizes, allowing every sectarian za'im to benefit from the maximum number of votes that they control within their spheres of influence. This was done at the expense of fair representation, given the difference in the size of electoral constituencies. In other words, this partitioning violates the principle of "one person, one vote" in different constituencies, enshrined by the Constitutional Council<sup>19</sup> based on the principle of equality among citizens. Thus, the weight of each vote varies among constituencies not only because of the arbitrary partitioning of constituencies, but also because of the marked disparity in the number of parliamentary seats allocated to each constituency. For example, there are 13 MPs in the Mount Lebanon 4 constituency (Chouf and Aley) and 11 MPs in the North Lebanon 2 constituency (Tripoli, Minieh, and Dannieh) as well as the South Lebanon 3 constituency (Bint Jbeil, Nabatiyeh, Marjayoun, and Hasbaya), while only six MPs are allocated to the Bekaa 2 constituency (Rashaya and West Bekaa) and five MPs are allocated to the South Lebanon 1 constituency (Saida and Jezzine).

## HIGH ELECTORAL QUOTIENT

Article 99, paragraph 3, excludes lists that have not been able to obtain an electoral quotient.<sup>20</sup> As such, this law turns the electoral quotient into a threshold of exclusion that prevents the list from winning a seat. Since the partition of electoral constituencies is not based on unified criteria, which undermines the credibility of

representation, the electoral quotient varies significantly<sup>21</sup> between constituencies. The quotient is also generally very high despite this disparity, which means that emerging political forces will find it difficult to cross the threshold of exclusion in order to gain a seat. Meanwhile, traditional parties that have, for many years, controlled state institutions and succeeded in building a clientelist network within their spheres of influence, are able to easily reach this electoral quotient.

## CLOSED LIST AND PREFERENTIAL VOTE

An important new aspect introduced by this law to the electoral process in Lebanon is the legal definition of the electoral list. Since 1922, electoral constituencies have generally included several seats, with voters placing one ballot in the ballot box in the form of a list including the names of all candidates they wish to vote for. This led to the widespread use of the term "list" by the Lebanese public, although the term was inaccurate because it did not have a basis in law. It was rather a political expression referring to candidates within a single alliance in a particular electoral constituency. Now, however, the electoral list became a legal concept defined under Articles 52, 53, and 54 of the Electoral Law currently in force. It is now mandatory for each candidate to join a list, failing which their candidature will be rejected.

The adoption of the legal definition of electoral lists has led to a major change in the Lebanese electoral culture. Before 2017, eligible voters could only vote for a number of candidates that did not exceed the number of seats allocated to their electoral constituency, while respecting the sectarian

<sup>19</sup> Decision No. 4 of 7/8/1996: "Whereas this Law has adopted [...] different parameters to determine electoral constituencies, creating a disparity among them and treating citizens, voters, and candidates unequally in terms of their rights and obligations, [...] thereby violating the principle of equality enshrined in Article 7 of the Constitution and in the preamble."

<sup>20</sup> The electoral quotient is the outcome of the division of the number of voters in each major constituency by the number of seats in the same constituency.

<sup>21</sup> For example, the electoral quotient in the 2018 elections in the North Lebanon 1 constituency (Akkar) was 19,059 votes, compared to only 5,459 votes in the Beirut 1 constituency.

distribution of these seats. In other words, the eligible voter could select candidates belonging to different political “lists” because the nomination was made on an individual basis. This allowed the voter to form any list they wanted, and they could choose not to vote for all candidates belonging to a single political alliance. This was referred to as the “striking” of a candidate from the “list” and replacing them with a different candidate.

Another phenomenon introduced by the new electoral law is the preferential vote, which allows the distribution of seats among candidates on the list that manages to cross the exclusion threshold. The new law established major constituencies comprising several minor constituencies. Paragraph 1 of Article 98 only allows the voter to give their preferential vote to one candidate in the minor constituency, i.e. the constituency where the voter is registered.

The preferential vote is undoubtedly a majoritarian element introduced to the proportional representation system. It leads to competition among candidates on the same list, thereby strengthening the personal and individualistic nature of the electoral competition. However, the most prominent feature of the single preferential vote is its political function. The minor constituencies are mostly homogeneous in their sectarian composition, which means that the voter will likely choose a candidate from their sect, once again strengthening the za’im’s control over voters: On the one hand, the za’ims can forge alliances amongst each other at the level of major constituencies, which have diverse sectarian composition; but, on the other hand, they ensure that supporters of other sectarian za’ims will not threaten their influence in the minor constituency, because these

supporters will only be able to give their preferential vote to candidates running in a different minor constituency. As a result, the influence of the za’ims who forge electoral alliances is solidified. Despite their public disagreements, the za’ims are able to join forces at the level of major constituencies, while guaranteeing that voters will act on sectarian grounds as expected at the level of minor constituencies.

## ELECTORAL SPENDING

Clear and transparent legal rules governing campaign funding and expenditure are a prerequisite for ensuring the integrity<sup>22</sup> and fairness of elections. The United Nation Human Rights Council warns that electoral processes are undermined by the lack of control over political campaign funding and expenditure, as “the absence of regulations controlling campaign funding and expenditure enables wealthy individuals and groups to exert influence and power over political candidates and groups and gives wealthy political participants an advantage.” Moreover, “a lack of laws regulating political financing and requiring full disclosure of information on the functioning of political organizations can also give rise to suspicions or confirmed cases of corruption, causing public mistrust in the political process.”<sup>23</sup>

The first attempt to regulate electoral spending in Lebanon was made under Law No. 25 of 2008 on the Election of Members of Parliament. This was also enshrined in the current law through various amendments, some of which have been addressed in this report in the section related to the amendments introduced at the end of 2021. The legally defined electoral spending limit was high in the 2018 elections, when

<sup>22</sup> In the same sense: Genuine elections comprise two broad elements: the first “was procedural and included the guarantees of periodicity, equality, and universality of suffrage, and secrecy of the ballot. The second was outcome-oriented and defined genuine elections as those which reflected the free expression of the will of the electors” (Center for Human Rights, Geneva, Professional Training Series No. 2, Human Rights and Elections, a Handbook on the Legal, Technical and Human Rights Aspects of Elections, United Nations, New York and Geneva, 1994, p. 12).

<sup>23</sup> Human Rights Council, 26th Session, July 2, 2014, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression, Frank La Rue, paragraph 45.

the exchange rate of the Lebanese pound was stable, and it remains high despite the devaluation when compared to the limit authorized in other countries.<sup>24</sup>

It is also worth noting that there is no legislation regulating the official financing of parties from public funds, which weakens new parties and emerging forces while benefiting traditional political actors who control massive financial resources and have a network of interests spread across the country, enabling them to finance their electoral campaign using their own funds.

What further undermines the credibility of elections is Article 62 of the new Electoral Law. Although this article prohibits “commitments and disbursement that involve the provision of services or payments to voters” during the campaign period, it nullifies this prohibition by introducing a flagrant exception in its second paragraph, which states: “The above-mentioned gifts and donations shall not be prohibited if they are provided by candidates or institutions owned or managed by candidates or parties who have been providing such gifts and donations in the same amounts and quantities on a regular and consistent basis for at least three years before the campaign period. In such case, the payments and donations offered during the electoral campaign are subject to the spending limit provided for in Article 61 above,” which specified the campaign spending limit for individual candidates and lists.

This article thus enshrines the long-standing clientelist practices of traditional parties, which, as mentioned in the first section, have been able to establish institutions that provide various social services, amid the state’s increasing inability to secure those services. As such, the law allows the za’ims to maintain their influence and to strengthen their control in the areas

where they are active, while emerging forces find themselves unable to compete, not only because of their limited financial resources, but also because they do not have an organized network of institutions that perpetuate the clientelist relationship between candidates and voters. It can even be said that this article encourages new parties aspiring to participate in political life to become part of the patronage regime by adopting the same clientelist practices, exploiting the needs of voters, and bribing them, albeit legally this time.

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<sup>24</sup> For example, the authorized spending limit in the French legislative elections is EUR 38,000 per candidate plus EUR 0.15 per resident of the constituency, while in Lebanon the limit in 2018 was USD 100,000 per candidate and USD 3.3 per voter, as well as the amount allocated to spend on the list as a whole which is also USD 100,000.



# CHAPTER II

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## **GENERAL CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING THE ELECTIONS AND DETECTED VIOLATIONS**

This chapter aims to analyze the general circumstances surrounding the electoral process and identify the violations committed by different parties during the election campaign period in order to document them and make an objective assessment of the integrity of the elections and the credibility of their results.

# FIRST: FACTS

Article 56 of the 2017 Law on the election of Members of Parliament stipulates that the election campaign “starts from the opening date of the candidate nomination period and ends at the closing of the ballot boxes.” The legal election campaign period was therefore opened on January 10, 2022 and ended on May 15, the date of the elections in Lebanon pursuant to Decree No. 8590 of December 29, 2021, which called upon the electorate to vote in Lebanon and abroad on specific dates.

The number of registered voters in all of Lebanon was 3,967,506, including 225,114 voters abroad were eligible to vote in the diplomatic missions in which they registered (compared to only 82,965 voters who registered abroad in 2018). This significant increase in registration numbers is due to the adoption of electronic registration, authorized by Article 113 of the Electoral Law and the requirement (in Article 114) that the number of registered voters in each polling center be no less than 200 voters. The previous Electoral Law of 2008 did not provide for electronic registration and required that at least 200 voters be registered in a single constituency (not polling center).

There is no doubt that the high number of Lebanese citizens residing abroad, especially young people who have immigrated due to the economic crisis, has contributed to the high number of expatriates choosing to vote abroad. Some media outlets launched concentrated campaigns to urge Lebanese expatriates to register, especially since they could elect candidates running in Lebanon

after the suspension of the articles that had established a special six-seat expatriate constituency, as we explained in the first chapter of this report.

The importance of the high number of voters registered abroad lies not only in the ability to effectively influence the election results, but also in the fact that they are not subject to any kind of political pressure in their new countries of residence. They are no longer associated with any kind of clientelism, as their personal interests are independent of their political orientation. This does not mean, however, that the patronage regime does not have any kind of support abroad, but its impact on voters is not as effective as it is in Lebanon, thereby ensuring fairer competition and promoting pluralism in the elections.<sup>25</sup>

In a statement issued on December 15, 2021, the Directorate-General of Personal Status indicated that 230,466 voters registered abroad, but 5,352 of them were not eligible to vote for the following reasons:

- 2,740 voters were not eligible to vote abroad, since fewer than 200 voters registered at their respective polling centers. Their names were included in voters’ lists in Lebanon.
- 681 voters did not meet the voting requirements (convicted, renounced Lebanese nationality, or acquired citizenship by decrees issued less than 10 years ago).
- 1,178 voters registered more than once.

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<sup>25</sup> It should be noted that the Lebanese Forces Party objected to the distribution of polling centers abroad. The LF addressed sharp criticism against the Minister of Foreign Affairs, affiliated with an opposing political party, and accused him of manipulating the distribution of expatriates’ polling stations by placing them far from their places of residence in order to obstruct the electoral process abroad and to reduce voter turnout.

- 753 voters entered their data manually (the Civil Status Registries did not find their information in personal status records).

The number of candidates at the end of the nomination period on the evening of March 15-16, 2022 was 1,043. Following the withdrawal of several candidates, and after the list registration deadline ended on April 4, 2022, the final figures were: 718 candidates spread over 103 lists, compared to 597 candidates running in 77 lists in the 2018 elections.

In terms of gender distribution, the figures show that 118 women were able to join lists, i.e. 16.43% of all candidates, while there were only 86 female candidates included in the lists in the previous parliamentary elections. The number of female candidates varies greatly among constituencies, with female candidates present in all major constituencies except for South Lebanon 3. For example, there were 23 female candidates in the Beirut 2 constituency, while this number drops significantly in the South Lebanon 1 constituency (three candidates) and the Bekaa 3 constituency (two candidates). Sixty-five lists included female candidates i.e., 63.10% of the total number of lists.

# SECOND: FINANCIAL AND LOGISTICAL OBSTACLES

Uncertainty regarding the fate of the elections was not only due to the intention of political powers to postpone them in order to avoid public accountability, as they had done more than once between 2013 and 2018, but also due to the administrative and logistical difficulties that state agencies faced in their efforts to organize the electoral process.

As public institutions continue to deteriorate due to scarce resources and significant price increases due to the devaluation of the Lebanese pound, serious challenges emerged. These were not resolved in a timely manner and were instead confronted with impromptu measures that undermined the public's trust in the electoral process.

A major challenge was the power outage, which threatened to paralyze the elections and undermine its credibility, particularly during the vote sorting and tabulation process and when announcing the results. The Électricité du Liban (EDL) held a meeting with the Ministry of Interior to find a solution to provide polling centers with electricity. On May 5, 2022, EDL announced that it will supply the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants building with uninterrupted electricity between May 5 and 9, in order to ensure live coverage to keep pace with the voting process abroad. EDL also confirmed that it will provide electricity to the 26 minor and major registration committee centers in all governorates from 05/05/2022 until 14/05/2022 at an average of 14 hours per day, in addition to providing these centers with uninterrupted, 24-hour electricity on election day and the day after.

One of the obstacles that impeded the electoral process was the reluctance or inability of some staff members assigned to the administration of polling stations to perform their duties. This was due to the fact that they were appointed to centers far from their places of residence, which entails very high transportation costs given the significant rise in fuel prices in Lebanon in the last year. Also, the compensation allocated to these employees was very low, although it was increased to LBP 3,000,000 and LBP 3,600,000. However, this remained much lower than the compensation disbursed in 2018, which ranged from LBP 600,000 to LBP 700,000 at an exchange rate of LBP 1,500 to the dollar.

The breakdown of state institutions and the uncertainty surrounding their ability to organize the elections undermined the credibility and seriousness of the entire electoral process, which reinforced people's indifference and threatened to disrupt the principle of periodicity of elections. This principle not only requires holding elections on time, but also instilling a firm conviction among voters and candidates that the elections will be held, which will help them prepare under optimal conditions.

# THIRD: CANDIDATES AND POLITICAL DISCOURSE

After 1990, the competition was practically limited during all the elections between candidates belonging to or recognizing the patronage regime. The 2018 elections were the only exception, with the emergence of the "Kuluna Watani" coalition, which brought together 66 candidates spread across nine lists that ran for the elections with a unified agenda in various constituencies. At the time, this coalition was believed to represent civil society organizations calling for a civil state, fighting corruption, and introducing a new approach to managing public affairs.

The October 17, 2019 uprising, which led to the total collapse of Lebanon's vital facilities and the failure of state institutions to defend society against banks and powerful figures, undermined the legitimacy of the patronage regime and loosened its grip on voters due to the state's bankruptcy and the regime's limited ability to use public funds to maintain its clientelist network. This was evident in the loss of the parties in power despite the alliances they formed in the trade union and university elections.

In order to form a true understanding of the actual political conflict reflected in the elections, it is necessary to recall the fundamental features of the patronage regime that has dominated Lebanon since 1992, which are evident at three levels:

- Restricting people's identity, by stripping individuals in Lebanon of their national identity and abolishing any sense of belonging they have in favor of their sectarian affiliation.
- Restricting group representation, by having a specific person, the za'im, represent a particular group of individuals, act as their exclusive spokesperson, and defend their "interests" (which are in fact the interests of the za'im).
- Restricting public institutions, whereby every constitutional institution is transformed into a symbol for the sectarian za'im. As a result, criticism of an institution becomes an attack on the authority of the head of this institution.

This "restriction" at all levels is the preferred defense used by the patronage regime. It is a solid construct that cannot be disrupted except by exiting it and rejecting its legitimacy entirely. Hence the importance of the popular Lebanese movement, which called for a new society to be built based on new political foundations. Once this movement took shape, it was able to obstruct this "restriction" dynamic, regardless of its long-term objectives and its uncertain prospects, due to the differing attitudes and positions of its members. This was seen through the following:

- Restoring subjective identity, allowing the individual to assert their citizenship and freeing them from inherited affiliations which classify under preconceived stereotypes, depriving them of their fundamental freedoms.
- Breaking free from the logic imposed by the za'im by spreading political awareness that brings together individuals based on their class and economic interests, allowing the emergence of a popular movement rooted in real social forces.
- Actively defending state sovereignty and promoting the rule of law by subjecting the work of political organizations to constitutional rules, allowing officials to be held accountable on the basis of clear and transparent criteria.

While sectarianism guarantees the interests of the za'ims by promoting values and behaviors that stifle a person's sense of dignity and drives them into despair and fatalism, the popular movement was able to remind citizens of their ability to take the initiative and of their right to demand change, allowing them to be optimistic and giving them hope in a better future.

The 2022 elections were in fact a conflict over legitimacy. The patronage regime succeeded in subduing the protest wave and spreading an atmosphere of despair, causing the majority of people to believe that the elections would not lead to the desired change, particularly after the Covid-19 pandemic and the Beirut Port explosion.

This is evident in the fact that the patronage regime pursued an electoral strategy based on the following:

- The za'ims nominated the vast majority of MPs elected in 2018, in total disregard of all the developments that have occurred since 2019, thereby continuing to operate according to the same rules that have shaped their political behavior for decades.
- Nomination of MPs under prosecution in the Beirut Port explosion case. After being formally charged, MPs Ali Hassan Khalil and Ghazi Zaiter invoked their dual immunity as former ministers and current MPs to avoid appearing before the investigating judge. They argue that they could only be tried before the Supreme Council for Trying Presidents and Ministers based on an accusation by Parliament. They did everything in their power to obstruct the investigation, abusing their right to legal recourse to guarantee their personal interests and evade prosecution. This culminated with the issuance of an arrest warrant in absentia against Ali Hassan Khalil on October 12, 2021, after he failed to appear for interrogation for the crime of "murder, abuse, arson and vandalism, with probable cause." Security forces refrained from executing the arrest warrant, allowing him to pursue his

political activity and run as a candidate for the elections despite his suspicious legal status.

- The nomination of figures from or close to the banking sector. For example, Hezbollah and Amal Movement nominated Marwan Khairiddine, Chairman of the Board of Directors at Al-Mawarid Bank, for the Druze seat in Hasbaya. Antoun Sehnaoui, Chairman of the Board of Directors at Societe Generale Bank, also supported several candidates in different constituencies, especially in the Beirut 1 constituency, in addition to some current MPs who submitted their candidacy again and who have official ties with the banks (MP Marwan Hamadeh, member of the Board of Directors at Credit Libanais Bank and former MP Elie Ferzli, shareholder at the Intercontinental Bank of Lebanon).

The parties in power are totally indifferent towards all the developments that have taken place in Lebanon since 2019 and the new social reality. They have formed electoral alliances despite their apparent disagreements and their mutual accusations in public. After 2005, the parties in power formed local electoral alliances that differed in each constituency in order to amass as many votes as possible and prevent emerging movements from securing any seats. The most prominent example of this is the single list that brings together the Free Patriotic Movement and the Amal Movement in the Mount Lebanon 3 constituency (Baabda) despite the sharp criticism and corruption charges levelled by each party against the other over the years.

One of the most notable developments in the recent elections was the decision of Future Movement leader Saad Hariri on January 24, 2022 to suspend his political work and boycott the elections. However, this decision was not an acknowledgment by Hariri of his responsibility in the disastrous situation of the country, but rather he lost the support of his regional backer, Saudi Arabia, and a significant portion of his financial resources, which disrupted the

clientelist network that his father Rafik Hariri had built since 1992. Hariri justified his position by stating Iranian influence should be countered and that a civil war should be averted, while presenting himself as a victim that was forced to accept settlements at the expense of his convictions.

Hariri's announcement came as a shock to the patronage regime, which is not accustomed to having one of its za'ims appear weak and relinquish power in this way. The za'ims' view of the elections was perhaps most clearly expressed by those who considered that the elections were no longer compliant with the "principles of the National Pact" because the za'im who "represents" the Sunni community was not taking part therein. According to this logic, the electoral process is not aimed at establishing an authority that emanates from the people, but at pledging allegiance to the za'im, i.e. consolidating the latter's authority and renewing the pledge of obedience and loyalty by voters.

The discourse of the parties in power was split between those who considered the events of October 17, 2019 and subsequent developments to be an external conspiracy or a coup against the President, and those who sought to confront another external conspiracy represented by Iran's influence and its armed proxies internally. Meanwhile, emerging movements and those calling for change were divided over their political, social and, economic proposals, despite adopting a public discourse rejecting the parties in power. By examining the electoral alliances and nominations, the following conclusions can be made:

- Opposition forces were divided across multiple lists in each electoral constituency, with the exception of the South Lebanon 3 constituency (Bint Jbeil, Marjayoun, Hasbaya, and Nabatiyeh), where there was a unified list of opposition forces.
- Local allegiances prevailed over the opposition lists. Self-proclaimed opposition lists were formed through alliances that sometimes included

dignitaries and political forces calling for change. As a result, no clear political agenda was presented to voters across Lebanon. This raises legitimate questions about the cohesion of these alliances after the elections and their potential disintegration, which would undermine their ability to present an alternative governance agenda. The only exception to this reality was the "Tahalof Watani" alliance, which formed three lists in the Beirut 1 and 2 constituencies and the Mount Lebanon 2 constituency (Baabda), while the "Citizens in a State" party stood out by forming lists either by itself or by joining other lists comprising other movements in almost all of Lebanon.

- Some MPs who ran in 2018 in the lists of the parties in power decided to run in opposition lists in the recent elections, including the businessmen who were a remarkable feature of the previous elections, and who now present themselves as independents critical of the traditional political powers, but without any actual agenda that clearly defines how to tackle the crisis in Lebanon.

One of the distinguishing features of the recent elections is that it was organized by a cabinet whose ministers did not run for the elections (with the exception of Minister of Industry George Boujikian), unlike the 2018 elections, when several ministers and even the Prime Minister and the Minister of Interior ran as candidates. However, this does not guarantee the impartiality of the executive branch, which consists of ministers affiliated with the political parties competing in the elections. Moreover, although he did not run directly as a candidate, the Prime Minister sought to be re-appointed to form the new cabinet after the start of the mandate of the new Parliament.

Holding both ministerial and parliamentary positions simultaneously has long been a controversial topic in Lebanon, prompting some to demand that Article 28 of the Constitution be amended such that this practice is prohibited, in order to achieve the

principle of separation of powers. The French Constitution, for example, does not prohibit ministers from running as candidates, but it does prevent individuals from holding an elected office at the Parliament or Senate and a ministerial position at the same time. The MP or senator who is appointed as a minister must choose to either retain their post and relinquish their seat at the Parliament or senate or, alternatively, resign from the cabinet within a period of one month. Article 25 of the Constitution of the Fifth Republic, amended in 2008, stipulates that a MP or senator who relinquishes their position in order to be appointed as minister shall return to their elected office once they leave their ministerial position.

In terms of judicial developments, the State Shura Council revoked the decision issued by the Directorate-General of Political Affairs and Refugees at the Ministry of Interior, which rejected the candidacy application of a citizen because they had removed their sect from their individual civil registry extract. This was a major development in the legal framework of elections in Lebanon. The State Shura Council considered that the right to be elected to is a fundamental right for individuals guaranteed by the Constitution, such that “the restriction of this right can only be carried out under a clear and explicit legal provision” (Decision No. 353 of 21/3/2022). Therefore, the mention of sectarian affiliation on official documents can be replaced by a statement from a competent religious authority specifying the candidate’s sectarian affiliation. Although this decision considers that the nomination is made solely on a sectarian basis, it recognizes the right of individuals who are not administratively affiliated with the historical sects recognized by Decision No. 60 L.R. of 1936<sup>26</sup> to run for the elections as a fundamental right that cannot be restricted by the administrative authority.

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<sup>26</sup> This decision explicitly recognizes the presence of Lebanese citizens who are not with to any of the historical sects.

# FOURTH: VIOLATIONS DURING THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN PERIOD

The Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE) monitored the electoral process in its entirety by receiving reports from its observers spread throughout Lebanon's governorates. These reports documented violations and general observations on the electoral process in all constituencies, as well as the extent to which local authorities, candidates, and campaign teams complied with the Electoral Law.

These reports cover the period from the beginning of March to mid-April. The violations can be classified and counted according to the following categories:

## ELECTORAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND BRIBES

The economic collapse and high poverty and unemployment rates among the Lebanese people have been coupled with a near-total absence of the state. In fact, the latter has completely abandoned its duty of defending society and offering a protection network for the most vulnerable. This has allowed traditional parties and influential financiers and businessmen to exploit the needs of the Lebanese people, who now lack food security, medicine, and healthcare services, particularly with the declining services and limited provisions of the National Social Security Fund.

The devaluation of the Lebanese pound no doubt enabled candidates with significant financial capabilities and sourced of funding in foreign currencies to strengthen their grip over voters, who are now more vulnerable to materialistic temptations and are willing to accept any kind of help, despite the fact

that these offerings are considered very low compared to people's pre-crisis income.

This reality is compounded by Article 62 of the Electoral Law, which does not distinguish between aid of different kinds and bribes. Although Article 65 of the Law stipulates that the disbursement of prohibited electoral expenses referred to in article 62 of the Law shall be considered as bribery as defined under the Penal Code, it is nearly impossible to distinguish between legitimate assistance and bribery. The law does not specify who is responsible for proving that the gifts and donations have been provided in the same amounts and quantities on a regular and consistent basis for at least three years before the start of the campaign period.

On April 7, 2022, the Electoral Supervisory Commission issued Statement No. 9, which considered that the donors were obligated to provide evidence that their gifts and donations have been offered in the same types and quantities and on a regular and consistent basis. The Commission did not specify the criteria that donors should adhere to in order to demonstrate their compliance with the law, particularly with the devaluation and continued volatility of the Lebanese pound, which leaves room for arbitrary practices and allows candidates to find various pretexts for unchecked spending.

In many electoral constituencies, candidates or parties were observed providing in-kind aid, including food rations, electrical equipment, and medicines.

The electronic ration card launched by the Council of Ministers after lifting subsidies

on basic commodities was effectively an electoral card, as it established a new channel for political clientelism. In fact, many political forces tried to take advantage of the ration card by registering households on the platform for electoral purposes. Moreover, the cabinet has yet to fulfil its promise of providing financial aid to households.<sup>27</sup>

The Electoral Supervisory Commission was aware of the USD to LBP exchange rate issue. The 2018 elections took place under a fixed exchange rate, which facilitated the task of scrutinizing the accounts of candidates. The current elections, however, took place not only amid continuous fluctuations in the exchange rate on the black market, but also with more than one exchange rate approved by the Banque du Liban and commercial banks. This has undermined the transparency of electoral spending and candidates' compliance with the legal limit. Therefore, the Commission issued Statement No. 8 on April 1, 2022, requesting that electoral expenses be declared exclusively in Lebanese pounds, and, in case of any USD expenses, that the spender submit official documents proving the exchange rate used to calculate the amount in Lebanese pounds.

The Commission also sought to discourage candidates from claiming that they were unaware of their photographs and advertisements being posted and that leaflets calling upon people to support them were being distributed. The Commission required candidates to either ask their supporters to remove these items if they were posted or distributed without their

explicit or tacit consent, failing which they would have to be declared and counted as part of their electoral expenses (Declaration No. 10 of 7/4/2022).

## INEQUALITY IN MEDIA COVERAGE

The use of traditional and social has become a staple of political action, especially during electoral periods when candidates must present their agenda and promote their positions before public opinion. International conventions have enshrined the principle of equitable access to media outlets for all parties running in elections. Hence the importance of electoral advertisement, which, despite its role in informing voters, should be organized and subject to certain controls, in order to avoid "excessive reliance on campaign funding and giving unfair advantages to well-funded political candidates."<sup>28</sup> For example, the European Court of Human Rights has affirmed that limiting freedom of opinion and expression through the regulation of paid electoral advertisement is justified in order to prevent powerful financial groups from controlling the media and to ensure a free and pluralistic space for debate protected by the state.<sup>29</sup>

Therefore, Chapter 6 of the 2017 Electoral Law includes provisions regulating electoral media and advertising, guaranteeing the neutrality of public media outlets and safeguarding candidates' right to use public media free of charge. Article 71 also specified the necessary conditions for regulating paid electoral advertising in private media outlets, which should also refrain from declaring

<sup>27</sup> Website of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Mikati during the Launch of the DAEM Ration Card Platform and the Emergency Social Safety Net Project: The severity of our current crisis compels us to abandon disruptive and conditional practices, December 1, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3aZNzt2>.

<sup>28</sup> Human Rights Council, 26th Session, July 2, 2014, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression, Frank La Rue, paragraph 51.

<sup>29</sup> "Finally, the Court notes that both parties have the same objective, i.e. to guarantee a free and pluralistic debate on issues of public interest and, more generally, contribute to the democratic process. It should therefore balance between the right of the right of the petitioning NGO to disseminate information and ideas of public interest that the public has the right to access, on the one hand, and, on the other, the authorities' concern that democratic debate and processes could be derailed by financially powerful groups having privileged access to influential media outlets. The Court recognizes that such groups could have a competitive advantage in terms of paid advertisement, thereby undermining free and pluralistic debate, which should be guaranteed by the State." (CEDH, Animal Defenders International vs. United Kingdom, Petition No. 48876/08, April 22, 2013).

their support for any candidate or electoral list. Article 71 also requires media and advertising outlets to “clearly state during the broadcasting or publication of electoral advertisements that such advertisements are paid and specify the client who requested their broadcasting or publication.”

There is no doubt that the enforcement of these principles during the election campaign period is very difficult, not only because of the disparity in financial means among candidates, but also because most media outlets are affiliated with political actors, particularly television stations that are owned by certain za’ims. After the civil war, the za’ims managed to control media outlets and share them amongst themselves, giving them a sectarian character and using them for their own political agendas and clientelist networks.

This was evident in the media coverage during the election campaign period, from February 1 until May 15, as “it was clear... that traditional political forces dominated TV stations, accounting for 95% of all coverage (direct access to news bulletins). This allowed them to promote themselves and market their proposals, while emerging political movements received only 5% of total coverage.”<sup>30</sup>

It should be noted that emerging forces are not necessarily the same ones that adopt an opposition discourse in public. Some businessmen and traditional parties classify themselves as part of the opposition, but they have strong financial capabilities, which has provided them with significant media coverage. The airtime fees that media outlets should declare to the Electoral Supervisory Commission are not transparently published for public access. Rather, unverified information was circulated about media outlets charging

candidates tens of thousands of dollars for appearances.

This reality prompted emerging movements to use free or low-cost<sup>31</sup> social media networks and online streaming platforms to spread their political discourse and express their opinion more freely. Although many countries are “increasing public funding to political parties in order to promote equal opportunities in the electoral process and reduce reliance on private sector funding,”<sup>32</sup> the absence of any legislation regulating public funding in Lebanon has led emerging movements to rely solely on their own capabilities, while traditional parties, businessmen, and lists supported by different platforms have been able to mobilize unmatched financial resources.

Furthermore, media outlets failed to broadcast educational and awareness material on the elections as mentioned in Article 75 of the Electoral Law, which stipulates that “During the electoral campaign period, audiovisual media outlets shall devote at least three hours per week to air electoral education programs co-produced by the Ministry of Information and the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities in coordination with the concerned media outlets.”

## VIOLENCE AND INCITEMENT

Respect for the freedom of voters and candidates to express their opinion by all legitimate means is a fundamental prerequisite for democratic elections. Citizens should therefore be “free to support or oppose the government, without undue influence or coercion of any kind which may distort or inhibit the free expression of the elector’s will. Voters should be able to form opinions independently, free of violence or

<sup>30</sup> Maharat, Report on Television Coverage of Parliamentary Elections, March 2022.

<sup>31</sup> The technical capacity of the Electoral Supervisory Commission to monitor electoral spending on social media and its ability to monitor rumors and fake news being circulated, particularly against emerging movements, is unclear.

<sup>32</sup> Human Rights Council, 26th session, July 2, 2014, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression, Frank La Rue, paragraph 62.

threat of violence, compulsion, inducement or manipulative interference of any kind.”<sup>33</sup>

The parties of the patronage regime made threats against emerging political figures and movements and prohibited them from rallying and expressing their opinion within their spheres of influence. Perhaps the most prominent of these attacks were:

Supporters of Amal Movement and Hezbollah in Baabda threatened candidate Farah Qassem and candidate Mounir Doumani (from the Qadrin list), who were heading to Chiyah to hold an electoral meeting at Hadi Nasrallah cafe, prompting the cafe owner to cancel the meeting hours before it was held. An electoral gathering for Farah Qassem in the Chiyah region was also cancelled after she was accused of espionage and was threatened with murder. Candidate Bushra Khalil also announced that she was threatened with murder, stating that Amal Movement supporters received instructions from their leader Nabih Berri to harass and intimidate candidates of the competing list. Khalil added that they threatened to burn her car and fired stun grenades and bullets at her house in an attempt to intimidate her and her family, in addition to being subjected to slander and defamation. Khalil was also subject to attacks on her reputation, honor, and dignity. Several reports indicated that candidates have been threatened, insulted, intimidated, and accused of treason, particularly in South Lebanon and the Bekaa. The opposition list in the South Lebanon 2 constituency was prevented from holding an electoral gathering by certain partisans, and the participants were denied entry to the venue. A bulldozer also destroyed a tent erected by opposition activists in Baakline (Mount Lebanon 4 constituency).

The shredding of candidates' photographs and banners and the pressures on some of them to withdraw their candidacy were a widespread phenomenon. Physical violence and systematic intimidation were widely

practiced by some militias-turned-political parties that had fought in the civil war and managed to extend their control on certain areas through violence and intimidation. After 1990, these militias became a de facto authority, and they gained strength through the political cover provided by the Syrian regime. They were able to harness state institutions to serve their clientelist interests. Opposition forces in those areas have been under considerable pressure, particularly in previous elections when public authorities failed to protect freedom of expression due to the parties' considerable control over public spaces.

This was accompanied by inflammatory discourse aimed at mobilizing voters to defend traditional parties that have been accustomed to sowing anxiety and intimidation throughout Lebanese society in the service of their electoral interests. As the elections approached, inflammatory and sectarian rhetoric, which has apparently become a predominant aspect of the electoral process, escalated. Many candidates and their supporters did not hesitate to accuse rivals of apostasy, terrorism, and of being agents for Israel. Their political discourse even went as far as interfering in the personal lives of rival candidates, defaming them, and attacking them based on their physical appearance or sexual orientation.

The parties of the patronage regime leveraged this inflammatory hate speech. Some accused their opponents of treason, espionage, and submission to embassy directives and external orders, while others claimed to defend Lebanon's identity against terrorism, Iranian influence, and encroachment on Christian areas. It should be noted, in this context, that Article 74 of the Electoral Law prohibits the broadcasting of any material that would constitute a means for exercising pressure, intimidation, intimation of disloyalty, or accusation of unbelief, as well as any material that incites

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<sup>33</sup> Human Rights Committee, Public Comment No. 25: Participation in the Department of Public Affairs and the Right to Vote. Fifty-seventh session, 1996, paragraph 19.

confessional, sectarian, or ethnic strife. It also prohibits defamation, libel, and slander against any candidate or candidate list.

## **INFLUENCE PEDDLING**

The neutrality of state agencies and public authorities is a prerequisite to ensure the integrity of the elections and the credibility of parliamentary representation. Article 77 of the Law on the Election of Members of Parliament expressly enshrined this requirement by stating in its first paragraph that "Public facilities, government departments, public institutions, universities, colleges, institutes, public and private schools and places of worship shall not be used for holding electoral events, meetings and rallies or for campaigning." Paragraph 2 states that "civil servants and employees of public institutions, municipalities, municipal unions and other similar persons may not promote a specific candidate or candidate list. They may not distribute leaflets that are in favor of or against any candidate or candidate list."

However, the influence that the patronage regime has been exerting on all state institutions for many years makes the principle of neutrality difficult to apply. Every za'im was able to control the main administrative and security positions in their areas of influence, which has undermined the independence of the public administration from political influence. This principle was enshrined by President Fouad Chehab during his term and it remained in place until the civil war. The collapse only occurred when the za'ims took control of power in Lebanon after 1990 and gradually destroyed the rights-based state structure, replacing it with clientelist structures that have turned people's rights into services granted by the za'im in exchange for political loyalty.

Traditional parties and their campaign teams used institutes, universities, places of worship, and national libraries during their political campaigns. The most prominent and frequent violations were

the public expression of support by some municipalities for certain political parties or the organization of promotional activities in the presence of candidates affiliated with a political party. This phenomenon can only be understood in light of the mechanisms of action of the patronage regime, which has also taken control of municipalities and integrated them within its complex and authoritarian clientelist network.

According to the Electoral Supervisory Commission's interpretation, the term "places of worship" does not include Hussein clubs or social venues and salons attached to churches and monasteries because they are not dedicated to worship rituals, which are only reserved to mosques and churches. Political activities may therefore be held in these places, especially since many Lebanese villages and towns lack private halls and venues for meetings, provided that all candidates are allowed to use them regardless of their political orientation (Statement No. 11 of 21 April 2022).

A recurrent violation committed by clerics was the incitement of believers during their sermons at places of worship to vote for a particular group. Official religious establishments are, in one way or another, part of Lebanon's political regime, particularly clerics who occupy positions of power in the religious hierarchy. Some clerics are even considered mouthpieces for the za'ims that appointed them in their positions. One of the most prominent official religious authorities that has taken explicit positions in support of a specific political party is the Grand Jaafari Mufti Sheikh Ahmad Kabalan, who on more than one occasion declared his support for Hezbollah and Amal Movement. Kabalan warned against interference by embassies and foreign funding, as an attempt to retaliate against the opposition and its arms, even going as far as considering that the elections are "true sign of devotion and a religious obligation." Kabalan also prohibited the boycotting of elections or voting with a blank ballot and called upon citizens to vote for the so-called "Shiite duo" and their allies.

On April 7, 2022, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait decided to return their ambassadors to Beirut more than five months after they were withdrawn. The Saudi ambassador was distinguished by his prominent media appearances and active political role in holding meetings with specific political parties a few weeks before the elections.

What was remarkable during this stage was the insistence of the Minister of Interior to declare public positions praising Gulf states, specifically Saudi Arabia. This seemed to be a pledge of political loyalty, which violates the principle of neutrality and gives the impression that the government body overseeing the elections is allied with a regional axis against another. This turned the state into an extension of the patronage regime, as it exposed Lebanese society to regional disputes.

## ELECTORAL SUPERVISORY COMMISSION

Historically, elections in Lebanon have been held under the exclusive supervision of the Ministry of Interior. This has often been the subject of criticism, due the questionable the neutrality of the political authority that organizes the electoral process. The Human Rights Committee enshrined in Article 28 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights had recommended that “an independent electoral authority be established to oversee the election process and to ensure its fairness, integrity and conduct in accordance with applicable laws and in accordance with the provisions of the Covenant.”<sup>34</sup>

Indeed, the 2008 Electoral Law provided for the establishment of such a body for the first time in Lebanon, and the current electoral law also required the formation of this body, giving it additional authority, which theoretically strengthened its role

in monitoring elections and ensuring their integrity. However, the 2018 elections proved the limited role of the Commission in terms of monitoring electoral spending, media ,and advertising, not to mention its limited role and the fact that it did not communicate with the public. This undermined the Commission’s image and left it vulnerable to interference from the political authority represented by the Ministry of Interior.

Perhaps the first problem the Commission faced in the current elections was the legal basis for its formation. Members of the Commission were appointed to oversee the 2018 elections under Decree No. 1385 of September 14, 2017, with their mandate set to expire six months after the completion of the general parliamentary elections as stipulated in Article 11 of the Electoral Law. This article also requires the Council of Ministers to appoint members of the new Commission one month before the end of the mandate of the existing Commission.

Since the Council of Ministers failed to exercise its role in appointing a new Commission, and pursuant to the last paragraph of Article 11, which gives the Commission permanent status by stating that “the existing body shall continue the exercise of its functions until a new Commission is appointed,” the Commission addressed a letter to the Ministry of Interior on November 8, 2018, informing it that it shall continue to exercise its functions with all its members in accordance with the law and to prevent any vacuum. However, the legal status of the Commission remained ambiguous. For example, during the by-elections held in the minor constituency of Tripoli on April 14, 2019, the Council of Ministers decided that the existing Commission would continue to perform its functions and that its mandate would expire two months after the completion of the parliamentary by-elections (Decision No. 46 of March 21, 2019).

<sup>34</sup> Human Rights Committee, Public Comment No. 25: Participation in the Management of Public Affairs and the Right to Vote. Fifty-seventh session, 1996, paragraph 20.

The failure of the political authority, represented by the Council of Ministers, to fulfil its legal duty has led to ambiguity in the legal status of the Electoral Supervisory Commission. While it was not responsible for this dilemma, it was repeatedly forced to justify its very existence. This weakened its credibility before the public, despite the fact that its permanent status was an important reform introduced by the current electoral law, contrary to the 2008 law, which only gave the Commission provisional status.

This ambiguity was clearly reflected in the first statement issued by the Commission upon commencing its work on January 25, 2022. In the reasoning behind its statement, the Commission indicated that it had held a meeting with the Minister of Interior on January 10, 2022, which concluded that the current Commission was authorized to supervise the elections because no new Commission had been appointed and in accordance with the principle of permanence and continuity.

The Commission undertook its duties with an incomplete membership, as it only had eight members out of 11 after the resignation of one member, the travel of another member, and the non-attendance of a third member. As a result, the Commission faced the risk of failing to reach quorum during its meetings, which is set at a minimum of seven members pursuant to Article 21 of the Electoral Law. After a noticeable delay, replacement members were appointed by virtue of Decree No. 8949 of March 16, 2022.

The Committee also faced the same obstacles it had encountered in previous elections, particularly the delay in opening the lines of credit to secure the necessary funding for the Commission. This was not done until the issuance of Decree No. 8814 of February 18, 2022, which ordered the allocation of funds to the budget of the

Ministry of Interior and Municipalities at a value of LBP 35 billion to cover the expenses of holding the parliamentary elections. The Council of Ministers allocated LBP 3.5 billion of this amount to the Commission, although it had demanded a budget of LBP 5.5 billion.

The lack of a separate budget for the Commission and its total dependence on the funds allocated to it in the budget of the Ministry of Interior limit its ability to effectively secure the administrative, logistical, and technical teams tasked with monitoring electoral media, advertising, funding, and spending. What further exacerbates the Commission's vulnerable financial situation<sup>35</sup> is not only the lack of an independent budget, but also its provisional nature, as the funds that are allocated to it are specifically earmarked for the organization of the elections. This means that the Commission does not have an annual budget that would enable it to ensure the sustainability of its administrative staff outside the election period.

Furthermore, the recommendations made by the Commission in its report<sup>36</sup> on the 2018 general elections, issued on November 7, 2018, as well as those made by all the local and international organizations that observed the elections, were not taken into consideration by Parliament when it amended the electoral law at the end of 2021. The issues raised in the report in terms of funding and the administrative staff were not resolved in the current elections.

The Commission continued to refrain from informing the public of the obstacles preventing it from exercising its functions, whether at the political, legal, or administrative levels. This lack of transparency was coupled with the Commission's publication of the administrative documents that candidates and media outlets are required to submit only, without giving the public access to

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<sup>35</sup> The Commission's limited financial resources and the lack of sufficient funds prompted it to request UNDP assistance (which provided in-kind aid, including the stationery necessary to perform its functions ahead of the 2022 elections).

<sup>36</sup> The report was published in the Official Gazette, Annex of Issue 3, January 18, 2019.

details on the spending of candidates and lists or the amounts paid to media outlets in exchange for their advertising services.

Rather than broaden its interpretation of the law in order to exercise more control over candidates and ensure the highest level of fairness and transparency in electoral spending and advertising, the Commission adopted a restrictive interpretation of Article 19 of the Electoral Law, which gives it the authority to grant permits to electoral observers. According to this interpretation, the provisions of the article apply to associations and researchers offering scientific analysis of the elections. On April 13, 2022, the Commission addressed a letter to the media monitoring association "Maharat" asking it to submit an application to obtain the required license from the Commission or to refrain from publishing its reports on the elections. Thus, the Commission became an authority that censors scientific research, by granting itself the power to prevent entities not involved in monitoring the electoral process in its procedural sense on election day from offering scientific explanations and analysis on the general context of the elections to the public and restricting the work of researchers interested in the subject.

The Commission adopted the same approach when interpreting the meaning of the election silence period, considering, in statement No. 14 of April 29, 2022, that election silence applies to all voting days. However, Article 78 of the Electoral Law states that the election silence period "starts exactly 24 hours before Election Day and lasts until the closing of the ballot boxes," without making any reference to other voting days. The "election day" referred to in this article is May 15, not the voting days dedicated to Lebanese citizens voting abroad on May 6 and 8 nor the voting day dedicated to public servants participating in the management of the electoral process on May 12.

By adopting a broad interpretation of Article 78 to include all voting days, the Commission interrupted the campaigns of

candidates and lists and deprived them of making optimal use of the few remaining days in the week leading up to election day. Although compliance with the Commission's directives is mandatory, the Electoral Law should be amended to address this legal loophole.

# FIFTH: VIOLATIONS ON VOTING DAYS

The Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE) was able to monitor and document a wide range of violations through its observers, who covered all voting days. These violations can be classified into major categories that will be reviewed successively in the subsequent paragraphs.

## VIOLATIONS DURING ELECTIONS ABROAD

LADE monitored the parliamentary elections held in a number of Arab and foreign countries on Friday May 6 and Sunday May 8, 2022 for non-resident Lebanese citizens, where LADE 80 observers were deployed at several polling stations in 29 countries: Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, UAE, Morocco, Sweden, Italy, France, Britain, Denmark, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, Russia, Turkey, Cyprus, Romania, Hungary, Poland, the Netherlands, Mexico, the United States of America, Canada, Ghana, Senegal, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Congo and Australia.

LADE observers also monitored the electoral process at the Operations Room of the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, documenting every detail of the voting days from the opening of the first ballot box until the closing of the last one.

These elections were calm and well organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants, which cooperated with observers and sought to find quick solutions to the complaints raised by the LADE. Polling stations were opened with little delay, all polling station equipment required by laws and regulations were available, and the centers that LADE observers visited

were properly equipped to ensure access to persons with special needs.

**Overall, the violations detected can be classified into the following categories:**

### PRESSURE ON VOTERS

Representatives of the Lebanese Forces, Progressive Socialist Party, Amal Movement, and the Association of Islamic Charitable Projects were present in front of and inside polling stations in an attempt to persuade voters to vote for their lists. This was sometimes accompanied by partisan gatherings in front of polling centers, with chants and slogans in support of specific parties, putting psychological pressure on voters. Party flags or tents were also erected around polling centers, undermining the impartiality of the electoral process.

The massive electoral advertising by traditional parties was one of the most prominent and recurrent violations. Party supporters played anthems and raised partisan flags and images, while some political figures made statements to the media, all of which constitute a violation of election silence.

### BREACH OF BALLOT SECURITY

Inadequate voting booths were documented in many polling stations in Australia, France, and Senegal. LADE observers also noted many cases where fully capable voters were escorted behind the voting booth, which is a violation of the Electoral Law.

In a few cases, voters photographed their ballot paper, in clear violation of the principle of ballot secrecy. This sometimes led to verbal altercations between voters and campaign representatives. It should be noted, in this context, that the Minister of Interior had issued Circular No. 16 on May 6, 2022, asking head officers to prohibit voters from using their mobile phones until after casting their vote and inserting the ballot paper in the ballot box.

### **MISCELLANEOUS ORGANIZATION ISSUES**

While the voting process in most centers was smooth, there was heavy overcrowding of voters in front of some centers, specifically at the Lebanese consulate in Dubai, leading to chaos due to the hot weather and the long queues that lasted for hours. In the second phase of the expatriate vote, several centers were not equipped to receive persons with special needs, and voters were sometimes forced to wait due to a shortage in official ballot papers or because polling station officers or clerks were on break with no substitutes, causing a general feeling of discontent among voters.

## **VIOLATIONS DURING THE VOTING OF POLLING STATION OFFICERS AND CLERKS**

The elections of polling station officers and clerks took place on Thursday, May 12, 2022. LADE deployed 76 observers at all polling stations and was able to detect a significant number of violations, including:

### **CHAOS AND LACK OF ORGANIZATION**

Perhaps the most prominent feature of the elections of polling station officers and clerks was the chaos that prevailed during the electoral process. This was particularly evident in the lack of knowledge of the voting mechanism by many voters. This

constituted a serious problem, given the fact that they were responsible for managing the Sunday elections and for guiding citizens on how to exercise their right to vote according to the law.

Power outages were also recorded at various times at several polling stations in Nabatiyeh, Marjayoun, Beiteddine, Joub Jannine, Bcharri, Zahle, Baalbek, Hasbaya, and Bint Jbeil. In Hermel, only one hour of electricity was provided during the entire day.

The lack of organization led to several incidents, such as verbal altercations among voters on the right to enter or tensions between security forces and voters who were waiting in the sun. The electoral process at one of the centers was interrupted by a verbal altercation between the head officer and a photographer working for a media outlet. Other centers also witnessed verbal altercations and tensions due to disputes between voters and campaign representatives.

### **BREACH OF THE PRINCIPLE OF NEUTRALITY**

Violations associated with poor organization included breaching the principle of neutrality of the authorities entrusted with managing the elections, which undermined the integrity of the electoral process and equality among candidates. This was caused by the breach of election silence and electoral propaganda at polling stations. The most serious violation, however, was the fact that polling station officers and clerks were not aware of their duties, particularly after the closing of ballot boxes. Many violations were observed during this period, the most serious of which was the participation of campaign representatives in the counting of envelopes and polling station officers or clerks receiving guidance from these representatives.

## CIRCUMVENTING THE LAW

Numerous cases where people circumvented the law were documented on election day. These violations were particularly serious because they were committed by public servants entrusted with ensuring respect of the law, as they were in direct contact with voters while assuming their official duties at polling stations. One of the most prominent violations was the breach of ballot secrecy, as several voters were observed photographing their ballot papers behind the voting booth. In addition, one voter attempted to take the ballot paper but was prevented from doing so, and another voter attempted to vote without having the required identification documents. One voter also refused to dip her finger in the indelible ink, which is the final step to complete the voting process.

Finally, it should be noted that the polling station officers and clerks did not undergo training as was customary. Instead, the Ministry of Interior only sent an educational video this year explaining in detail how the electoral process should be managed, the measures to be taken at polling centers before the opening of ballot boxes and during election day, and vote counting and tabulation methods.

## VIOLATIONS ON ELECTION DAY ACROSS LEBANON

The parliamentary elections took place on Sunday May 15, 2022 across Lebanon, a week before the end of the current Parliament's mandate on May 21. The political authority considered the mere fact of holding the elections an achievement worthy of celebration, despite the fact that this is a fundamental constitutional duty that is part of the state's responsibilities.

LADE, which deployed over 1,200 observers in all polling centers and stations across Lebanon, documented a considerable number of flagrant violations and breaches that threatened the integrity of the electoral process. This calls into question the official rhetoric referring to the elections as a "democratic celebration," which the Ministry of Interior sought to disseminate.

The violations that were documented during the expatriate voting days were repeated on a larger scale, taking a more serious turn at times due to their violent nature. These violations threatened the integrity of the electoral process, which was supposed to be conducted in an atmosphere of freedom and equality. The most notable violations documented by LADE are listed below. These uncover the truth behind the official narrative hailing this democratic achievement and provide an objective image of the Lebanese parliamentary elections.

## VARIOUS LOGISTICAL PROBLEMS

There was a significant lack of knowledge of the electoral process among polling station officials, due to the limited training and the widespread uncertainty on whether the elections would be held on time. This translated into logistical problems that caused delays in opening some polling stations and a shortage of supplies in others, particularly ballot papers, further disrupting the electoral process.

The most notable indicator of lack of electoral culture among polling station officials and voters was the large number of rejected ballots<sup>37</sup> during vote counting and tabulation. In fact, 57,873 ballots were rejected, indicating that the campaigns to raise the awareness of voters and to train polling station officials failed to inform and empower citizens to exercise their right to vote.

<sup>37</sup> Further aggravating this reality are the reports indicating mistakes in the ballot count in many polling stations, especially since the competition was tight and certain candidates won by a small difference. This could lead to the annulment of the results in case of an appeal before the Constitutional Council.

The procedural violations that could be attributed to a lack of knowledge of the electoral law, neglect, or fraudulent intent include the absence of the polling station officials' signature on the ballot paper, which could lead to its rejection, as well as the numerous cases where people voted without dipping their finger in the indelible ink. There were also cases where polling station officials did not count the ballot papers and envelopes before opening the ballot boxes or verify that the ballot papers match the number of registered voters who signed the voters' lists before starting the count.

### **HARASSMENT OF OBSERVERS**

LADE observers were subject to harassment in different regions, particularly in South Lebanon constituencies, where the predominant political parties' exert significant pressure. This harassment took on many forms, including insults, threats, expulsion, confiscating mobile phones, and assaults. Below are the most notable incidents of harassment that LADE observers endured:

- Most observers in Saida Villages, a total of 31 observers, were harassed by Hezbollah and Amal Movement representatives.
- An observer in Rmadiyah, Tyre, was threatened by an Amal Movement representative.
- Two observers in Saksakiyeh were threatened and asked to leave.
- An observer in Kfar Melki, Saida, was insulted and beaten by a Hezbollah representative.
- Several observers were harassed by Hezbollah representatives.
- Several observers were beaten by Hezbollah in Nabi Chit, Baalbek.
- Observers in Baadaran, Chouf were harassed by the head officer of a polling station and Progressive Socialist Party supporters.
- An observer in Mansourieh was threatened by Lebanese Forces representatives.

- An observer in Rmeileh, Aley, was threatened and her phone was confiscated by Lebanese Democratic Party representatives.

### **SECURITY INCIDENTS AND CASES OF VIOLENCE**

The escalating tensions and incitement to violence during the electoral campaign period, coupled with the Electoral Supervisory Commission's failure to prevent this type of incidents, led to the occurrence of numerous acts of violence across Lebanon. The most dangerous of these incidents occurred in regions under Hezbollah and Amal Movement dominance. A candidate running against the "Shiite duo" was assaulted in the Baabda constituency, asked to leave the area, and accused of being a Zionist. Moreover, the electoral process was interrupted in several polling centers due to altercations and fights between candidate representatives or assaults against polling station officials. Journalists were not spared. Photographer Hussein Bassal was beaten in the southern village of Ansar because of the political orientation of the media outlet he works for.

### **ELECTORAL ADVERTISING**

Violations of the election silence period were too many to count. Numerous candidates and politicians made statements inside polling stations or directly in front of polling centers. This was accompanied by intensive electoral advertising, along with significant partisan presence and notable activity of electoral campaign teams, especially those belonging to dominant parties. This resulted in pressures exerted on voters, whereby representatives followed voters inside the polling stations to direct or urge them to vote for a particular party.

The Electoral Supervisory Commission had issued an urgent statement on the "commission of violations by the hundreds, due to the breach of election silence by

different media outlets, candidates, and political parties.” The Commission also stated that it was making the necessary calls to address these violations, but this did not prevent these breaches from continuing and aggravating.

On May 19, 2022, the Commission published a brief assessment of the elections. It stated that as the election date drew near, the rhetoric between competitors and on social media increased in severity – a rhetoric filled with “accusations of treason, threats, and intimidation, aimed at exacerbating tensions, provoking sectarian strife, and distorting the electoral process.”

### **BREACH OF BALLOT SECURITY**

It was reported that a large number of voting booths were installed in a way that did not sufficiently cover voters while marking their chosen candidates on the official ballot paper, in violation of the principle of ballot secrecy. It was also noted that, in many constituencies, the head officer of the polling station or representatives would accompany the voter inside the booth under the pretext that they were illiterate or suffered from a disability, without actually verifying these allegations. One voter was documented photographing their ballot paper without any action on the part of the head officer to prevent this violation. LADE observers also documented certain instances where the head officer refrained from giving the envelope to the voter until after they stepped behind the booth and right before casting their vote.

### **VIOLATIONS DURING VOTE COUNTING AND TABULATION**

After the closing of ballot boxes, LADE detected a number of violations, the most notable of which was preventing observers from attending the vote counting process at certain polling stations. There were also power outages during vote counting in a number of centers. The most serious

violation, however, was the fact that the representatives of certain lists participated in the envelope counting process after the ballot boxes were opened in preparation for the vote counting process.

LADE also noticed that the judges in primary and higher registration committees did not follow any specific and unified standards to count valid votes. Many LADE observers recorded cases where judges deemed ballots as valid although the vote was placed outside of the designated box. At the same time, the judges rejected votes for the same issue, without any clear criteria for determining the validity of such votes.



# CHAPTER III

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## CONCLUDING RECOMMENDATIONS

# CONCLUDING RECOMMENDATIONS

By thoroughly analyzing the May 2022 parliamentary elections within their political and legal context, this report shows that the amendments and reforms that should be introduced cannot be limited to technicalities, as the political regime supervising the electoral process holds the greater share of responsibility in derailing democracy, stripping it of its true essence, and limiting it to its procedural meaning (procedural democracy), which reduces it to a mere voting mechanism. As a result, this report will propose a set of legal recommendations, while emphasizing that they are not enough under the current patronage regime.

## CONSTITUTION:

- Introduce organic or basic laws into the Constitution, which would automatically subject them to the Constitutional Council's control, without the need for appeals. The electoral law should be one of these laws.
- Amend Article 19 of the Constitution related to the powers of the Constitutional Council, enabling the latter to supervise the elections effectively without limiting its role to receiving information and reports from the Ministry of Interior and the Electoral Supervisory Commission. This includes, as is the case in France, giving it the power to appoint its own representatives from among civil and administrative judges, who should be empowered to enter polling stations and record any violations they encounter, then report back to the Constitutional Council to make a final decision when looking into electoral appeals.
- Amend Article 21 of the Constitution to lower the voting age to 18.
- Amend Articles 39 and 40 of the Constitution to enable the prosecution of MPs if they violate the Electoral Law, regardless of their parliamentary immunity.
- Implement Article 95 of the Constitution by establishing a National Committee to study and propose the means to ensure the abolition of political sectarianism.
- Implement Article 22 of the Constitution by establishing a Senate and specifying its powers.
- Add an article to the Constitution requiring the separation parliamentary office from ministerial office to ensure a clearer separation of power.
- Add an article to the Constitution prohibiting the amendment of the electoral law one year before the upcoming elections.

## CONSTITUTIONAL COUNCIL:

- Amend Article 1 of the Law on the Establishment of the Constitutional Council and Article 1 of the latter's internal regulations in line with the proposed amendment to Article 19 of the Constitution and give the Council the authority to review organic laws without the need for an appeal.
- Amend Article 24 of the Law on the Establishment of the Constitutional Council to empower competent civil bodies to file reviews, complaints, and appeals on the electoral process before the Constitutional Council.

## **ELECTORAL SYSTEM:**

- Reconsider the distribution of constituencies in a way that respects the constitutional obligation to give every vote the same electoral value, while also applying actual proportional representation. Having medium-sized constituencies with an equal and balanced number of seats (around 20 seats per constituency) is a guarantee for democracy and justice.
- Amend Article 98 of the Electoral Law by abolishing the preferential vote and adopting the closed list system with a pre-arranged order of candidates based on the zebra system (alternating between women and men on the candidate lists).
- Amend Article 99 of the Electoral Law by eliminating the electoral quotient or reducing it to 5% or less.
- Revoke Articles 112, 121, and 122 of the Electoral Law on the expatriate constituency and enable expatriates to vote for candidates running in electoral constituencies within Lebanon, similar to resident voters.
- Impose a 50% women's quota in the composition of lists as a provisional measure to ensure that female candidates have equal opportunities as male candidates by adopting appropriate procedures.

## **ELECTORAL LAW:**

- Amend Articles 4, 5, and 6 of the Electoral Law to enable members of the LAF and security forces and detainees under investigation to vote, as well as to enable naturalized persons to vote and run as candidates upon receiving their citizenship.
- Amend Article 7 of the Electoral Law to reduce the candidacy age to 22 years.
- Amend Article 45 of the Electoral Law to abolish the nomination fee or reduce it significantly and allow candidates to reclaim it after the elections under certain conditions.
- Further clarify Article 78 of the Electoral Law on the election silence period, providing voters in Lebanon and abroad with sufficient time to make their choice without any form of pressure or advertisement. This also allows candidates to run their electoral campaigns fairly and equally inside Lebanon and abroad.
- Revoke Article 84 of the Electoral Law on the electronic magnetic card, since the latter can be used by powerful parties to pressure voters, not to mention the complications related to its issuance and the fact that it serves no particular benefit.
- Amend Article 85 of the Electoral Law in order to ensure ballot secrecy. Polling stations often include a relatively small number of voters of the same gender and sect, which makes it easier for electoral campaign teams to determine who each voter elected after the vote counting and tabulation, especially since voter turnout is often low.
- Amend Article 120 of the Electoral Law on the procedures for vote counting abroad to make them cost-effective (in terms of transporting boxes from and to Lebanon and issues that may arise in the transportation process), ensure ballot secrecy, and avoid any influence that expatriate votes may have on voters in Lebanon. The expatriate vote counting and tabulation process should also be clarified in more detail.
- Equip all polling centers to be inclusive and accessible to all marginalized social groups, specifically persons with disabilities, the elderly, and pregnant women.
- Establish mega polling centers to enable voters to vote in their area of residence, while taking the necessary measures to guarantee this right, particularly the pre-registration of voters before any general or by-elections.
- Adopt participatory mechanisms for official and non-official stakeholders concerned with the elections to discuss and enact the electoral law.

## **ELECTORAL FUNDING, SPENDING, AND ADVERTISING:**

- Amend Article 58 of the Electoral Law by not classifying voter transport under the campaign spending of candidates. Rather, this practice should be prohibited entirely and considered to be a form of electoral bribery.
- Amend Article 59 of the Electoral Law to include lifting bank secrecy on all accounts of all candidates, their spouses, their ascendants, and their descendants during the electoral campaign.
- Amend Article 60 of the Electoral Law by considering the voluntary work of representatives part of electoral spending.
- Amend Article 61 of the Electoral Law by reducing the campaign spending limit and revoking the last paragraph of this article, which allows this limit to be reconsidered by virtue of a decree issued by the Council of Ministers, leaving room for arbitrary measures by political authorities.
- Revoke paragraph 2 of Article 62 which benefits political parties that are accustomed to clientelism, by classifying all in-kind and cash contributions as a form of bribery, whether candidates have been offering such contributions for a long time or not. Travel expenses and transportation fees should also be considered a form of bribery.
- Add a chapter to the Electoral Law on the clear, transparent, and public regulation of funding mechanisms for parties and candidates in Lebanon and abroad.
- Increase the fines imposed on candidates who violate the rules on electoral spending and advertising and adopt a mechanism to collect these fines to ensure compliance.

## **ELECTORAL SUPERVISORY COMMISSION:**

- Amend Chapter III of the Electoral Law to establish a permanent, independent electoral administration body and transfer all relevant competencies from the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities to the said body. This body should also be given complete financial independence and entrusted with managing the parliamentary elections in Lebanon and abroad rather than any other ministry.
- Provide the Commission with its own permanent, annual budget, to be included in the state's general budget under a separate chapter.
- Provide the Commission with permanent headquarters and create its own administrative staff to ensure its continuous work even outside the electoral period.
- Grant the Commission legal personality with prosecution powers and enable it to enforce its own procedural and executive decisions through a security agency placed under its direct command. There should also be specific criminal penalties for violations of the Electoral Law.
- Require the Commission to publish all the periodic and final financial reports it receives to the public.

## **PROCEDURES:**

- Adopt clearer criteria on valid and invalid ballot papers for judges sitting on registration committees.
- Develop implementation mechanisms that ensure equality in media coverage for all candidates.
- Ensure equality between all candidates in order for them to carry out their electoral campaigns inside Lebanon and abroad without any pressure or prohibition.
- Further ensure ballot secrecy by prohibiting representatives from escorting voters behind the booth and preventing voters from photographing the ballot paper inside the booth.

- Strengthen communication between the Electoral Supervisory Commission and the public, raise voter’s awareness on the electoral process, and optimize the Commission’s cooperation with specialized organizations.

## OTHER LAWS:

- Enact a new Law on Political Parties to regulate their political and social work and their funding mechanisms and sources.
- Enact a Unified Personal Status law and enable Lebanese women to grant their citizenship to their children and husbands on equal grounds with men.
- Enact all legislations on offering legal protection to the victims of gender-based violence who denied the right to practice any political or partisan activities and eliminate all forms of discrimination related to fundamental rights and freedoms.

## INCIDENTS RECORDED BY MOBILE OBSERVERS:

**NUMBER OF VIOLATIONS: 2669**



Delays in opening the polling stations on time after 7:30 am



Violence in and around polling centers



Withholding of ID cards



Polling station head officer and candidate representatives escorting voters behind the booth

1.	Other violations (installing the voting booth in a way that breaches ballot secrecy, breach of election silence, pressure by party representatives on polling station officers...)	<b>910</b>
2.	Prohibiting observers, candidate representatives, or journalists from entering polling centers	<b>12</b>
3.	Polling center not equipped to welcome people with special needs or the elderly	<b>147</b>
4.	Delays in opening the polling stations on time after 7:30 am	<b>58</b>
5.	Threat of violence (severe tensions at the polling center, verbal altercations between voters or representatives, gatherings of armed persons of partisans...)	<b>91</b>
6.	Intimidation or pressure on voters in or around polling centers	<b>310</b>
7.	Candidate representative/polling station head officer escorting voters behind the booth	<b>528</b>
8.	Voters with disabilities or elderly voters having to be carried inside the polling station to vote	<b>88</b>
9.	Interference by a public servant or security forces in favor of a certain candidate or list	<b>31</b>



Mistreatment of women by security forces, campaign teams, and polling station officers and clerks



Persons voting without dipping their finger in the indelible ink



Vote buying on election day



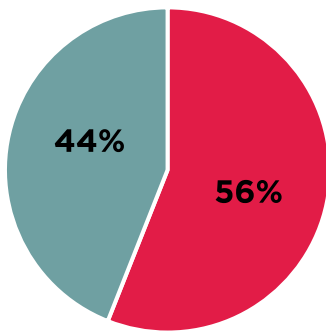
Polling center not equipped to welcome people with special needs or the elderly

10.	Voters not dipping their finger in the indelible ink	<b>19</b>
11.	Withholding of ID cards	<b>12</b>
12.	Using cellphones inside the polling station without any objection by the head officer	<b>109</b>
13.	Obstruction of the electoral process by a candidate	<b>54</b>
14.	Official ballot papers taken outside the polling station	<b>20</b>
15.	Absence of the clerk and/or head officer during the voting process	<b>83</b>
16.	Violence in and around polling centers (fistfights, armed confrontation, vandalism, assaults against journalists, media outlets, polling station officers and clerks...)	<b>41</b>
17.	Persons voting without dipping their finger in the indelible ink	<b>7</b>
18.	Using public resources for electoral purposes (municipal vehicles, public schools, municipal headquarters, public dispensaries...)	<b>47</b>
19.	Preventing candidate representatives from entering the polling station	<b>6</b>
20.	Vote buying	<b>16</b>
21.	Mistreatment of women by polling station officers and clerks (harassment, pressure, verbal and physical violence, threats)	<b>36</b>
22.	Arrival of large numbers of voters shortly before the closing of ballot boxes	<b>23</b>
23.	Mistreatment of women by security forces (harassment, pressure, verbal and physical violence, threats)	<b>7</b>
24.	Roadblocks or voters' inability to reach polling centers	<b>9</b>
25.	Mistreatment of women by campaign teams (harassment, pressure, verbal and physical violence, threats)	<b>5</b>

# INCIDENTS AND REPORTS RECORDED BY FIXED OBSERVERS:

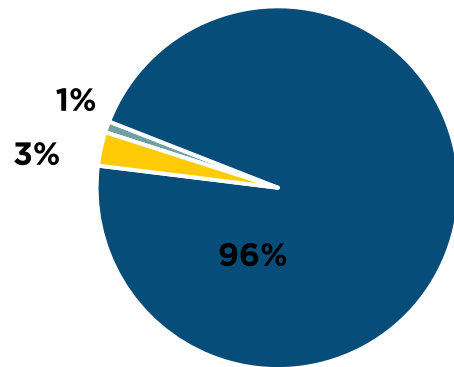
## VIOLATIONS AT POLLING CENTERS

Did you observe voters with special needs being carried inside the polling station?



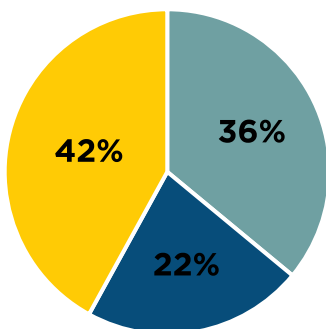
■ Yes    ■ No

Were security forces present near the polling center?



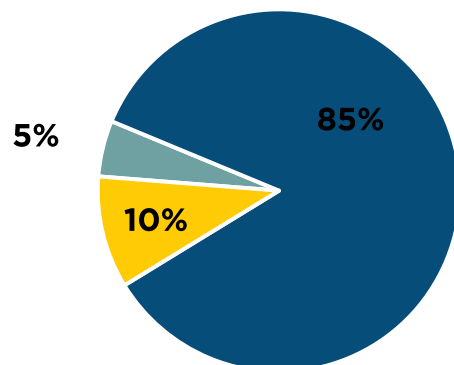
■ No    ■ All the time    ■ Briefly

Was there chaos in or around the polling center (overcrowding of voters, party representatives...)?



■ No    ■ All the time    ■ Briefly

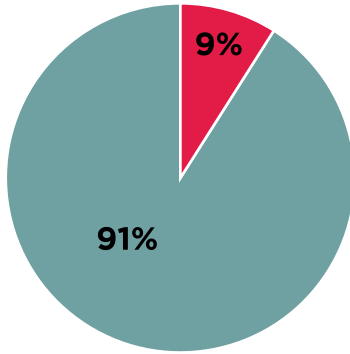
Were the IDs of people entering the polling center verified?



■ No    ■ All the time    ■ Briefly

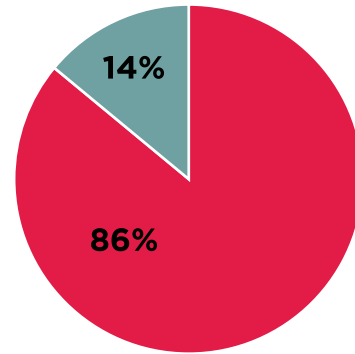
## VIOLATIONS AT POLLING STATIONS

Did anyone vote outside the voting booth?



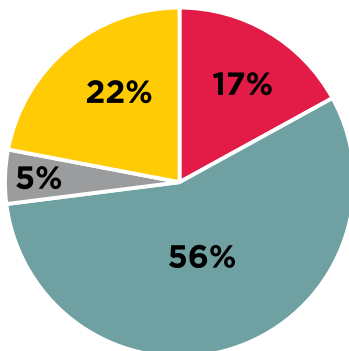
■ Yes    ■ No

Did the polling station head officer make sure that the envelope is not empty before placing it in the ballot box?



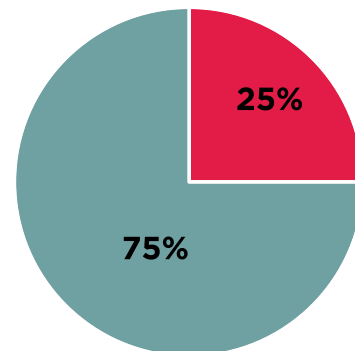
■ Yes    ■ No

Were voters escorted by representatives inside the polling station?



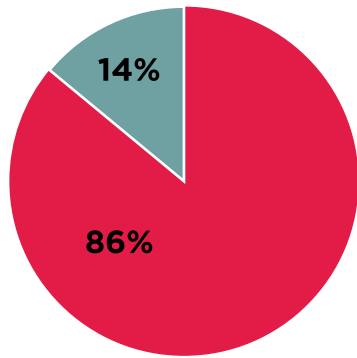
■ Yes    ■ Most of the time  
■ No    ■ Sometimes

Was any voter escorted behind the booth without a legal justification?



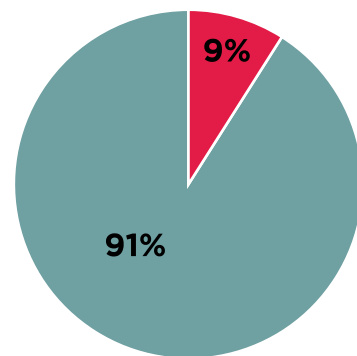
## VIOLATIONS AT POLLING STATIONS

Was there any electoral advertising inside the polling station?



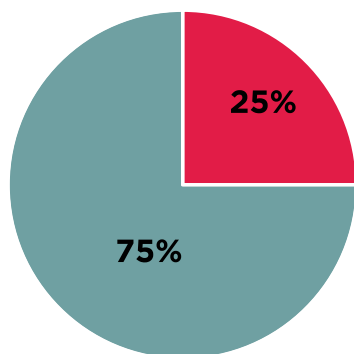
■ Yes   ■ No

Were all the supplies available at the polling station at the launch of the electoral process (voting booth, ballot papers, transparent box, ink, envelopes, pens, voters' lists, reports...)?



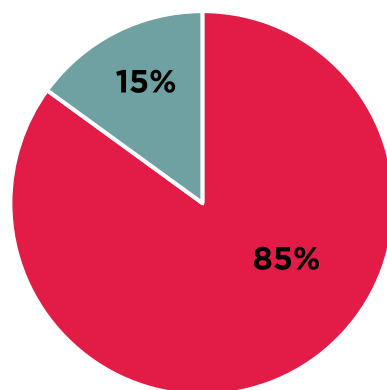
■ Yes   ■ No

Was there chaos inside the polling station (jostling, screaming, overcrowding...)?



■ Yes   ■ No

Was the voting booth installed in a way that guarantees ballot secrecy?



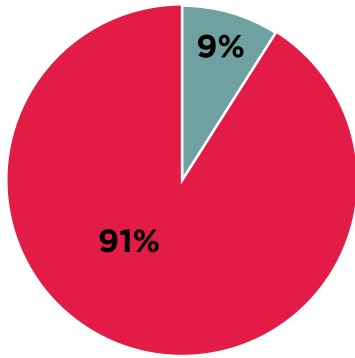
■ Yes   ■ No

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## VIOLATIONS AT POLLING STATIONS

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Did voters use their cell phones or any other device to take photos behind the voting booth?



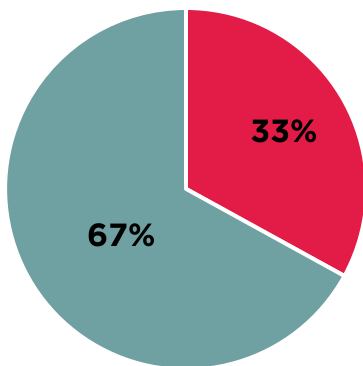
■ Yes    ■ No

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## SPECIALIZED REGISTRATION COMMITTEES

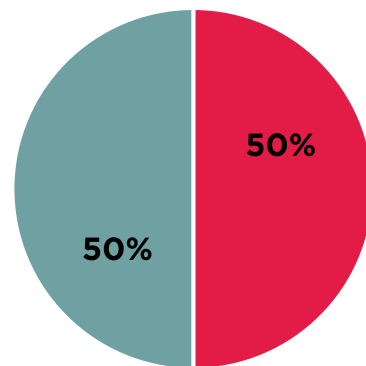
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Did any technical error occur during vote counting and tabulation (primary registration committees)?



■ Yes    ■ No

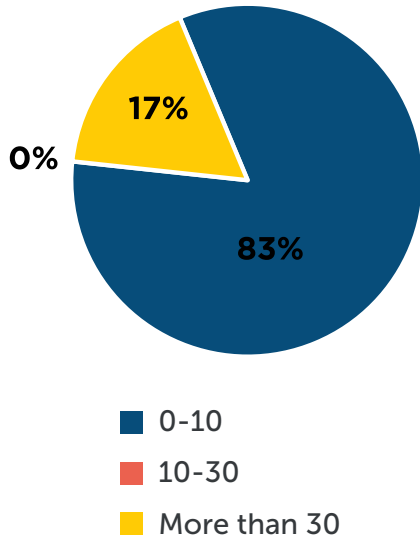
Did any technical error occur during vote counting and tabulation (higher registration committees)?



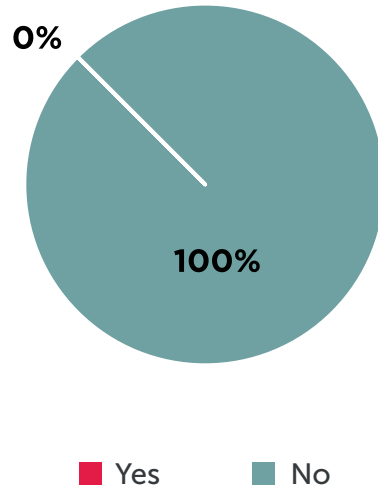
■ Yes    ■ No

## SPECIALIZED REGISTRATION COMMITTEES

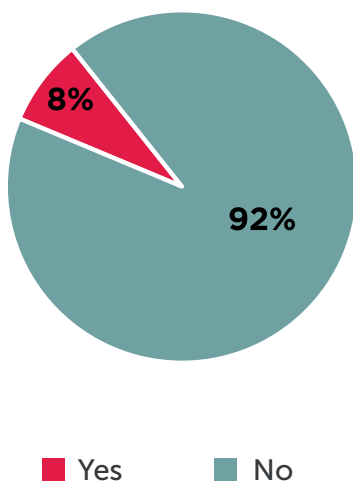
How many open envelopes were delivered to the primary registration committees?



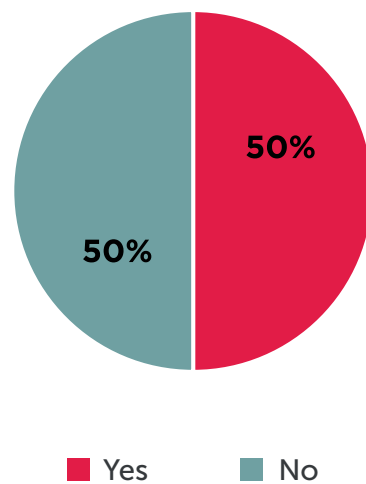
Was there a power outage at any point during the vote counting and tabulation?



Were any observers, candidate representatives, or journalists prevented from attending the vote counting and tabulation at the primary registration committees?

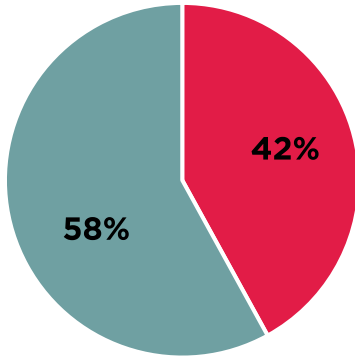


Were any observers, candidate representatives, or journalists prevented from attending the vote counting and tabulation at the higher registration committees?



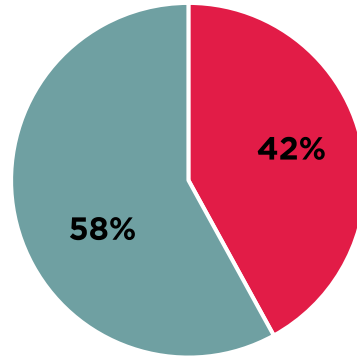
## SPECIALIZED REGISTRATION COMMITTEES

Was the vote counting and tabulation process interrupted at any point?



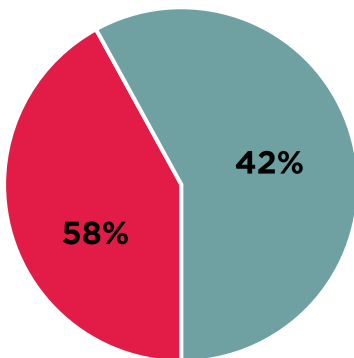
■ Yes ■ No

Was there chaos during the handing over of ballot boxes at the primary registration committees?



■ Yes ■ No

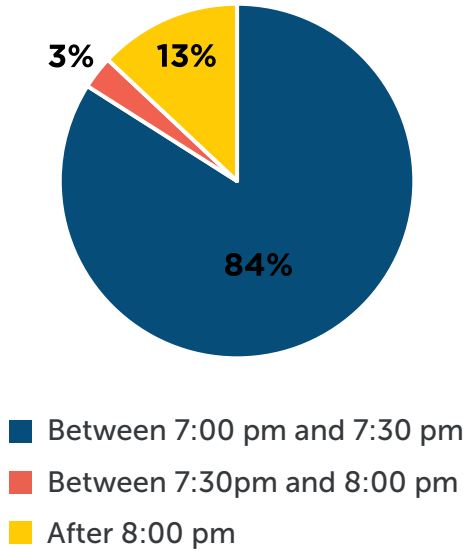
Were there any discrepancies between the number of votes in the polling station reports and the number of votes in the computer results at the primary registration committees?



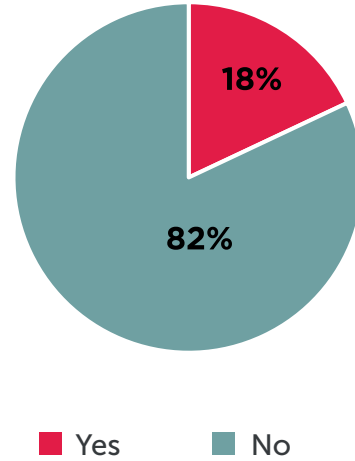
■ Yes ■ No

## VOTE COUNTING AND TABULATION AT POLLING CENTERS

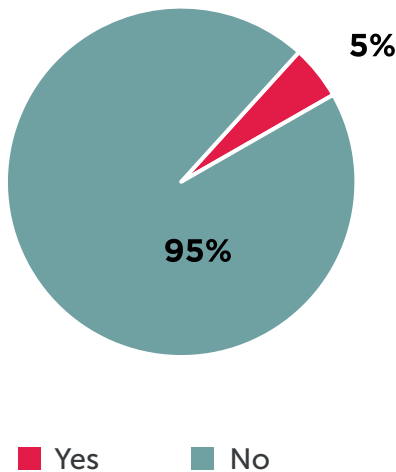
When did the voting end?



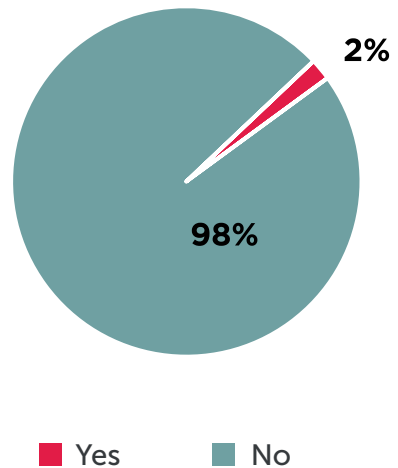
Was there a power outage at any point during the vote counting and tabulation?



Were there any discrepancies between the number of envelopes in the box and the number of voters?



Were any observers prevented from monitoring the vote counting and tabulation process?



## 2022 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS OBSERVATION METHODOLOGY

### CONTEXT

The 2022 Parliamentary Elections will be held amid heightened fears over the democratic aspect and transparency of electoral process under Law No. 44/2017 and its amendments by virtue of Law No. 8 of 03/11/2021, in light of the current structural divide in Lebanese society and its impact on the entire electoral process. Following the October 17, 2019 Revolution, new and/or renewed political groups emerged on the political scene to participate in the electoral process, despite the lack of clarity. These groups, which emerged from the popular movement, attracted and will continue to attract a wide array of civil society activists. This will affect LADE's observation of the elections, since many of its members and volunteers will participate in political action as candidates and/or electoral campaign members, volunteers, and representatives. Some of them are former LADE General Secretaries, former board members, trainers, support team members, and ordinary members and volunteers.

#### **This year's elections will also be held in the wake of some major events:**

- October 17, 2019 Revolution
- Beirut Port Explosion
- Stifling financial and economic crisis and its significant impact on citizens' lives
- Resounding collapse of State institutions
- Covid-19 pandemic
- Widespread clientelism

Based on this compounded context, LADE is facing a set of issues, the most notable of which are deep-rooted concerns related to the impartiality and objectivity of many observers.

However, in light of the current events, it seems that the electoral process will be completely different this year. There is serious competition in numerous electoral constituencies outside of the traditional, historic framework (traditionally, Zahle and Kesserwan qazas and the Northern Metn electoral constituency have always been a source of concern in terms of pressuring and bribing voters and fraud – in other words, a hub for intense competition). Today, however, there are concerns regarding other electoral constituencies, particularly those that were known to have quiet and/or settled electoral battles such as the South Lebanon 2 and 3 electoral constituencies. As a result, the elections will witness an increased incidence of violations.

LADE is compelled to reconsider its observation methodology based on the aforementioned developments in response to the current context. It will also examine the methodologies that need to be adopted for the observation process to achieve its purpose:

The new conditions and developments surrounding the electoral process are a source of concern as they threaten the democratic nature from the onset of the electoral campaign (and even before that). This does not mean that the technical aspects of the electoral process should not be monitored, but during these particular elections, they might be overshadowed by the concerns and fears related to the increased incidence of violence, direct and indirect pressures, bribery, fraud, and provocative rhetoric (confessional-sectarian, regional, violence of all types, and accusations of serving the interests of foreign embassies or external powers).

This is where the image diverges from the previous elections, taking us all the way back to pre-2005 elections. It is therefore necessary to adapt the observation methodology in order to face these developments.

### **Observation Process Highlights:**

- It will be focused on the democratic dimension of the electoral process.
- It will be directed towards qualitative rather than quantitative observation.
- It will emphasize the political and democratic dimensions of elections observation and focus less on technical aspects, to the extent possible.

## **I. COORDINATION UNITS:**

LADE has adopted the traditional administrative division (26 qazas) when elaborating the coordination unit distribution map, sending one coordinator or more to every qaza depending on its geographical dimensions. In many qazas, more than one coordinator will be appointed given the qaza's geographic-population characteristics.

These coordinators (new and old) were trained and empowered (electoral law, international standards for elections, recruitment, communication and outreach, managing the electoral process...) in order for them to complete their mission professionally and efficiently.

Many coordinators face challenges related to the geographical remoteness of the constituencies to which they are assigned, in addition to other factors related to socio-cultural differences with the electorate. This is not limited to the electoral constituencies that include 2 or 4 qazas, but also single-qaza electoral constituencies (i.e. Northern Metn, which covers 4 distinct geographical areas: mountainous areas, the coast, Burj Hammoud, and the central area). As a result, LADE has distributed coordinators according to the following table:

	Electoral Constituency	No. of Seats	No. of Coordinator/ Constituency	No. of Long-term Observers in the Constituency
1.	<b>Beirut 1:</b> 1 constituency – 1 preferential vote at the constituency level	8	1 Coordinator	3
2.	<b>Beirut 2:</b> 1 constituency – 1 preferential vote at the constituency level	11	1 Coordinator	
3.	<b>Mount Lebanon 1:</b> Jbeil-Kesserwan qazas, 1 preferential vote per qaza	8	Jbeil Coordinator Kesserwan Coordinator	2
4.	<b>Mount Lebanon 2:</b> Metn qaza, 1 preferential vote at the constituency level	8	1 Coordinator	2
5.	<b>Mount Lebanon 3:</b> Southern Metn-Baabda qaza, 1 preferential vote at the constituency level	6	Baabda Coordinator Southern Suburbs Coordinator	2
6.	<b>Mount Lebanon 4:</b> Chouf and Aley qazas, 1 preferential vote per qaza	13	Aley Coordinator Chouf Coordinator	3
7.	<b>North Lebanon 1:</b> Akkar qaza, 1 preferential vote at the constituency level	7	Akkar Coordinator	3
8.	<b>North Lebanon 2:</b> Tripoli, Minieh, and Dannieh qazas, 1 preferential vote per qaza	11	Tripoli Coordinator Minieh-Dannieh Coordinator	4
9.	<b>North Lebanon 3:</b> Zgharta, Bcharreh, Koura, Batroun, 1 preferential vote per qaza	10	Bcharreh Coordinator Zgharta Coordinator Batroun Coordinator Koura Coordinator	6
10.	<b>South Lebanon 1:</b> Saida-Jezzine, 1 preferential vote per qaza	5	Saida Coordinator Jezzine Coordinator	2
11.	<b>South Lebanon 2:</b> Tyre-Saida Villages (Zahrani), 1 preferential vote per qaza	7	Zahrani Coordinator Tyre Coordinator	3
12.	<b>South Lebanon 3:</b> Nabatieh-Bint Jbeil-Marjayoun/Hasbaya, 1 preferential vote per qaza	11	Nabatieh Coordinator Marjayoun-Hasbaya Coordinator Bint Jbeil Coordinator	4
13.	<b>Bekaa 1:</b> Zahle, 1 preferential vote at the constituency level	7	West Bekaa-Zahle Coordinator	2
14.	<b>Bekaa 2:</b> West Bekaa-Rachaya, 1 preferential vote at the constituency level	6	West Bekaa Coordinator and Rachaya Coordinator	2
15.	<b>Bekaa 3:</b> Baalbek and Hermel qazas, 1 preferential at the constituency level	10	2 Baalbek Coordinators Hermel Coordinator	4

## II. OBSERVERS:

### 1. LADE WILL DEPLOY VARIOUS TYPES OF OBSERVERS IN LEBANON:

#### i. Stationary observers at polling stations:

LADE will not deploy permanent stationary observers in all polling stations across Lebanon.

#### ii. Mobile observes at polling centers:

They will play an important role, monitoring the behavior and performance of voters and electoral campaign teams (observer in every polling center), in order for them to monitor the functioning of the electoral process in all centers (stations, courtyard, vicinity).

- All polling center observers will be present at the opening of ballot boxes on election day and will attend the vote counting process at the same station at the end of the day (stations are pre-determined based on their sectarian distribution of in the electoral constituency, provided the data is sent according to a specific form beforehand).
- Observers move “quietly” between polling stations in the center they are assigned to in order to follow up on the progress of the electoral process.

Observers should obtain a copy of vote counting records in all of the center’s polling stations (if they are able to do so).

#### iii. Mobile observers in the electoral constituency:

They include the observers working under the coordinator assigned to the constituency. They are charged with monitoring the progress of the electoral process according to specific geographical regions, as well as the needs and work of stationary observers at polling centers.

#### iv. Support teams:

They include observers with practical experience in observation and decent knowledge of elections and crisis management mechanisms (former and current administrative board members, trainers, LADE activists and friends).

#### v. Registration Committee Observers:

Given the importance of this stage of the election day, and based on the experience of the 2018 elections, observers will be deployed according to a previously determined map and will receive a special training. This category consists of:

1. Higher Registration Committee Observers
2. Primary Registration Committee Observers
3. Observers monitoring the arrival of polling station head officers

The main task of this category is to ensure that legal procedures are respected and that the arrival of ballot boxes and envelopes and the vote sorting, counting and final sorting are carried out according to the law.

#### vi. Long-term Observers:

In light of previous experiences in monitoring the electoral process (parliamentary and municipal) in Lebanon, it is clear for LADE that the electoral campaign period is the most important stage of the entire elections. Observation during election day is no longer sufficient (despite its importance), as

many breaches and violations of the law are committed by candidates (independent and partisan) during the campaign period, which includes numerous activities, meetings, media campaigns, electoral promises, bribes, and pressure on voters. Therefore, LADE has gathered, trained, and deployed a group of “long-term observers” to follow-up on all incidents taking place in the electoral constituency within their geographical area.

**These observers will be deployed according to the following table:**

	<b>Electoral Constituency</b>	<b>No. of Seats</b>	<b>No. of Long-term Observers in the Constituency</b>
1.	<b>Beirut 1:</b> 1 constituency – 1 preferential vote at the constituency level	8	3
2.	<b>Beirut 2:</b> 1 constituency – 1 preferential vote at the constituency level	11	
3.	<b>Mount Lebanon 1:</b> Jbeil-Kesserwan qazas, 1 preferential vote per qaza	8	2
4.	<b>Mount Lebanon 2:</b> Metn qaza, 1 preferential vote at the constituency level	8	2
5.	<b>Mount Lebanon 3:</b> Southern Metn-Baabda qaza, 1 preferential vote at the constituency level	6	2
6.	<b>Mount Lebanon 4:</b> Chouf and Aley qazas, 1 preferential vote per qaza	13	3
7.	<b>North Lebanon 1:</b> Akkar qaza, 1 preferential vote at the constituency level	7	3
8.	<b>North Lebanon 2:</b> Tripoli, Minieh, and Dannieh qazas, 1 preferential vote per qaza	11	4
9.	<b>North Lebanon 3:</b> Zgharta, Bcharreh, Koura, Batroun, 1 preferential vote per qaza	10	6
10.	<b>South Lebanon 1:</b> Saida-Jezzine, 1 preferential vote per qaza	5	2
11.	<b>South Lebanon 2:</b> Tyre-Saida Villages (Zahrani), 1 preferential vote per qaza	7	3
12.	<b>South Lebanon 3:</b> Nabatieh-Bint Jbeil-Marjayoun/Hasbaya, 1 preferential vote per qaza	11	4
13.	<b>Bekaa 1:</b> Zahle, 1 preferential vote at the constituency level	7	2
14.	<b>Bekaa 2:</b> West Bekaa-Rachaya, 1 preferential vote at the constituency level	6	2
15.	<b>Bekaa 3:</b> Baalbek and Hermel qazas, 1 preferential at the constituency level	10	4

## **2. MECHANISM FOR IDENTIFYING CRITICAL POLLING CENTERS:**

These are selected separately from the random sample.

**Polling centers are considered critical if they meet the following criteria:**

- There are voters who are politicians/candidates.
- It is a conflict zone and/or has an electoral significance, based on previous experiences.
- It is deemed critical based on the opinion of the electoral constituency coordinators.

## **3. OBSERVING ELECTIONS ABROAD:**

**LADE will observe elections abroad according to the following criteria:**

- Number of polling stations.
- Number of observers.

Based on the non-resident citizen elections of 2018, the main role of this category is to observe election day (STO's) in embassies, consulates, and any other chosen location.

They will undergo a special training on the electoral law and the observation methodology, under the supervision of a headquarters official who will be their only focal point.

**Note:**

- It might be challenging to observe the electoral campaigns abroad, but LADE is working on obtaining data on these campaigns.
- If enough observers are available, 2 observers could be deployed to every polling center.

## **APPLICATION:**

LADE will use a mobile application to obtain all information and data during the electoral campaign and on election day.

## **CENTRAL TEAM:**

- Media and Central Communication Department
- Volunteering and Training Department
- Violations Department
- Logistics Department
- Finance Department

## **GENDER:**

Part of the long-term observers' work will include monitoring candidates' activities and performance and the behavior of electoral campaigns, as well as voters, towards them.

## **OBSERVATION OF POLLING CENTERS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES:**

Continued coordination with the Lebanese Physically Handicapped Union for information on the matter.

## **PERIODIC REPORTS:**

Publishing a biweekly report (attached to the LTO's), specifically in March and April 2022.

## **FINAL REPORT:**

A specialized professional will be contracted to develop the reporting methodology and legal and political introductions before election day. This will save time, as the larger part of the report will be ready while awaiting election day data.

**REQUIRED DATA:** Observation forms.

# PURPOSE OF THE OBSERVATION PROCESS

## LADE OBSERVES ELECTIONS:

- To ensure that the Lebanese people are exercising one of their most basic rights, i.e. the right to vote.
- To measure how citizens are exercising their right to vote. It is not enough for citizens to head to the polling stations and vote. LADE strives to ensure that the process is free, fair, and transparent.
- To measure the quality of the polling experience, as LADE assesses all stages of the electoral process according to specific criteria:
  - Legal framework governing the electoral process.
  - All the details of the electoral process, from the preparation of voters' lists to the last appeal of electoral process.
  - Minimizing violations that could occur in the absence of observers at times, which enhances the overall electoral process.

The observation of elections generally aims to monitor, document, and audit violations and breaches of laws, decrees, and procedures. This process starts with the preparation of voters' lists in the year before elections, continues through the electoral campaign period, and lasts until the last decision regarding an appeal is issued by the Constitutional Council, in order to offer an accurate assessment and present a series of recommendations for reform to improve the electoral process in the future.

## OBSERVATION IS UNDERTAKEN AT THE FOLLOWING LEVELS:

- Electoral administration bodies (namely the Ministries of Interior and Foreign Affairs and the Electoral Supervisory Commission).
- Lebanese authorities (central and local).
- Candidates' performance (independent and partisan).
- Lebanese judiciary.
- Voters' behavior, which facilitates the preparation of awareness programs in the subsequent stage.

In order to achieve thorough monitoring, LADE usually divides Lebanon into 26 geographical areas with 26 coordinators and 26 assistant coordinators deployed across all of them.

The General Coordination Unit in Beirut monitors the performance of the Ministries of Interior and Foreign Affairs, the Electoral Supervisory Commission, central authorities, political parties in general, and media coverage. Long-term observers are in charge of this task at a local level in their respective electoral constituencies.

This methodology was developed according to the provisions of Law No. 44/2017 (currently in force) and its amendments by virtue of Law No. 8 of 03/11/2021, as well as international standards for democratic elections, the decrees and decisions issued by the Ministry of Interior on elections, and the circulars issued by the Electoral Supervisory Commission.

**This report details the different levels and mechanisms of observation, the adopted standards, information management systems, and the types of electoral violations.**

## OBSERVATION STAGES

- Stage 1: Voters' Lists
- Stage 2: Electoral Campaign Period
- Stage 3: Election Day
- Stage 4: After the Elections – Monitoring Complaints

## ELECTION OBSERVATION LEVELS

**Observation targets the following parties:**

1. The Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Electoral Supervisory Commission, the Registration Committees, municipalities, and security agencies: Observing organization mechanisms, performance, and deadlines, before, during, and after election day.
2. Candidates, lists, political parties: Observing compliance with the law with regard to nomination, electoral spending, electoral media and advertising, and interaction with eligible voters.
3. Eligible voters, their behavior, and their response to incidents and events.
4. Lebanese authorities and the abuse of power for electoral purposes.

## SOURCES OF INFORMATION USED BY LADE TO PREPARE OBSERVATION REPORTS:

**LADE relies on various sources to obtain information:**

1. Reports sent by observers deployed across different regions who detect violations during the electoral campaign period and on election day.
2. Reports sent by citizens after thorough review by LADE.
3. Daily media scan to monitor the political and media scene, as well as the political, institutional, and security positions, statements, and developments which could impact eligible voters' freedom and the democratic aspect of the elections.
4. Social media and official candidate pages.
5. Lessons from previous elections, including evaluations/observations/recommendations, while taking into account the current context as well as human and financial capacities.

# 2022 ELECTORAL PROCESS OBSERVATION STANDARDS

## 1. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

### CENTRAL OFFICE:

#### MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND MUNICIPALITIES

<b>Organization Mechanisms</b>	Were voters' lists prepared according to Articles 24 to 35 of Law No. 44/2017?
	Do voters' lists include all names (first name, father's name, and family name) of all eligible voters according to Article 54 of Law No. 44/2017?
	Were head officers of polling stations trained?
	Were Primary Registration Committees formed according to Article 36 of Law No. 44/2017?
	Were Registration Committees' locations published in the Official Gazette?
	Was an incomplete candidate application accepted?
	Did the Ministry of Interior take the necessary measures to equip polling stations to make them accessible to persons with disabilities according to Article 96 of Law No. 44/2017?
	Did the Ministry of Interior take the necessary security measures to facilitate voters' movement on election day according to Article 91 of Law No. 44/2017?
	Did the Ministry of Interior provide polling stations with all the necessary supplies as stipulated in Article 92 of Law No. 44/2017?
	Do ballot boxes comply with international standards?
	Does the used ink comply with international standards?
	Did the Ministry of Interior take any measures to punish those who violated the Electoral Law?
	What is the women to men ratio at the level of security forces charged with ensuring the smooth functioning of the electoral process?
Did the Minister of Interior approve the internal regulations of the Commission?	
<b>Performance</b>	Is there any candidate running in more than one electoral constituency?
	Were any candidacy applications rejected without valid justification?
	Were the head officers of polling stations appointed according to the law?
	Was the voting process of polling station officers conducted according to the conditions of Article 88 of Law No. 44/2017?

## MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND MUNICIPALITIES

<b>Deadlines</b>	Did the municipalities at various electoral constituencies abide by the delivery dates of ID cards?
	Were deadlines respected when preparing voters' lists?
	Did the Ministry of Interior publish the names and locations of polling centers 20 days before election day according to Article 85 of Law No. 44/2017?
	Was the nomination deadline closed 60 days before election day according to Article 46 of Law No. 44/2017?
	Did any of the candidates withdraw their candidacy after the 45-day period specified in Article 50 of Law No. 44/2017?
	Was there any abuse of power in crossing off and adding names to voters' lists (before 30 March)?

## ELECTORAL SUPERVISORY COMMISSION

<b>Organization Mechanisms</b>	Did the Commission publish its internal regulations?
	Did the Commission publish its observation mechanism?
	Did the Commission publish its agenda?
	Does the Commission's work methodology include all clauses mentioned Article 19 of Law No. 44/2017?
	Did the Commission continue to observe candidates who withdrew their candidacy after the legal deadline?
	Did the Commission observe all aspects of candidates' electoral campaign spending from the date of their nomination until the closing of ballot boxes?
	Did the Commission hold regular weekly sessions?
	Did the Commission hold additional meetings when needed, in its determined location?
	Did the Chairperson of the Commission convene meetings, set their agenda, specify their date, chair them, manage them, direct the discussions, and require that the deliberations and suggestions of members be included in the minutes?
	Did the head of the Commission announce the decisions made by this Commission?
	Did the Commission appoint one of its members as Secretary?
	Did the Chairperson of the Commission and its members comply with the obligations stipulated in Law 44/2017, particularly Article 19, specifically with regard to the parliamentary elections?
	Did the Commission form committees to facilitate the implementation of the functions assigned to it by law?
Did the Commission dismiss any of its members for violating the obligations stipulated in the law, by the absolute majority of the Commission's members, upon approval of the Minister of Interior and Municipalities?	

## ELECTORAL SUPERVISORY COMMISSION

<b>Organization Mechanisms</b>	In case the internal regulations of the Commission were amended, was this done by the absolute majority?
	Did the Commission succeed in preparing awareness programs for eligible voters and broadcast them on television?
	What are the measures taken by the Commission in lieu of awareness programs?
	Did the Commission prevent a civil society organization from observing the elections?
	Does the content of the Honor Code set by the Commission guarantee the right of civil society organizations to observe and monitor the electoral process?
<b>Electoral Spending</b>	Did the candidates open bank accounts that show the account name and number?
	Was bank secrecy lifted off campaign accounts?
	Was bank secrecy lifted off the accounts of candidates' relatives when required by a court of law?
	Did the Commission monitor the spending of candidates or political parties in the following cases:
	Renting electoral offices and their expenses.
	Organizing gatherings, festivals, public meetings, and banquets for electoral purposes.
	Preparing, publishing, and distributing media and advertising material, including books, booklets, pamphlets, flyers, or messages in print, email, or digital form.
	Designing, printing, distributing, and hanging pictures, posters, and banners.
	Compensation paid to people and representatives working for the electoral campaign.
	Covering the transport fees of voters and electoral campaign activists.
	Paying for electoral advertising and any other campaign expenses to a TV or radio channel, newspaper, magazine, or any other media outlet.
	Were the donations and contributions provided by the candidates counted as part of their electoral spending limit (if they had not been offering such donations and contributions for the past 3 years)?
	Did the candidates comply with the electoral spending limit?
	Did the financial statement include all contributions and expenses earmarked for the campaign?
	Did candidates respond to the Commission's request for information, documentation, or clarification regarding the campaign's account?
Did the statement include all transactions made during the campaign?	
Are any of the statements not dated or not notarized?	

## ELECTORAL SUPERVISORY COMMISSION

<b>Electoral Spending</b>	Did each candidate provide a comprehensive financial statement along with documentation within the month after the end of the electoral campaign?
	Did the statement include all contributions and expenses earmarked for the campaign?
	Did any candidate pay any expenses to any local party above the electoral spending limit which was not regularly paid during the last three years?
	Did any candidate pay any expenses for electoral advertising above the electoral spending limit: festival, advertisements, number of offices...?
<b>Electoral Media and Advertising</b>	Did the candidate submit an advertising request to the Commission 3 days prior to its broadcasting in the media?
	Did the candidate exclusively use the billboards whose prices were disclosed to the Commission?
	Is there any evidence that a candidate allocated over 50% of the total advertising spending to one particular media outlet?
	Did the candidate or political party comply with the locations devoted to electoral media and advertising?
	Is there an advertising for a party or coalition, anywhere in Lebanon, using a name, slogan, color, or symbol belonging to a political party, without candidates' names?
	Did any candidate concede the spaces allocated for their electoral advertising to another list or candidate?
	Did any candidate or political party use any sectarian, confessional, or ethnic provocation in their rhetoric?
	Did any candidate or political party include any instigation to murder and violence in their rhetoric?
	Did any candidate use unauthorized media outlets to advertise themselves?
Did the candidate or political party comply with the silence period?	

## 2. OBSERVERS:

### ON ELECTION DAY

<b>Observation inside Polling Stations</b>	Were there any supplies missing at the polling station? Were any polling station officers missing?
	Was the voting booth appropriate?
	Is there an official copy of the voters' list?
	Are there sealed envelopes from the Ministry of Interior?
	Was the ballot box verified to be empty?
	Did every voter sign and dip their finger in the indelible ink?
	Did every voter show their ID card before casting their vote?
	Did any voter cast their vote outside the booth?
	In case a proxy was used, was the voter in question proven to have any special needs?
	Was there a polling center that was not equipped for persons with disabilities?
	Were there any electoral pictures or symbols inside the polling station?
	Was there any electoral activity inside or outside the polling station?
	Was the polling period extended for voters inside the polling center?
	Were voters organized in a way that ensures their arrival at the polling station on election day?
	Was there any abuse of power to pressure voters or influence their choices?
	Were any representatives or observers expelled or prohibited from doing their job?
Was there any violation of ballot secrecy?	
Was the head officer of the polling station absent when voters were casting their votes?	

## AFTER THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

<b>Observation inside Polling Stations</b>	Were envelopes counted before the start of the vote counting and tabulation process?
	Were cameras used during the vote counting and tabulation process?
	Were the temporary results signed by the head officer of the polling station?
	Did a candidate's representative reject the announced results?
	Was there any violent reaction by a citizen or political party?
	Was any media outlet prohibited from covering the vote counting and tabulation process?
	Did the minutes mention the number of envelopes that exceed the number of voters?
	Were ballot papers that bear any special markings counted?
	Were ballot papers that bear any special markings rejected?
	Were there any open envelopes? Were they counted?
	Did the polling station minutes mention any incidents of expelling or prohibiting a representative?
	Were the results posted on the polling station door?

## REGISTRATION COMMITTEES

<b>Organization of the Electoral Process</b>	Was there any abuse of power in crossing off and adding names on voters' lists?
	Did the registration committees review requests to correct voters' lists thoroughly and decide on them?
<b>Election Day</b>	Were registration committees present on election day to answer citizens' inquiries?
	Did registration committees provide permits for voters whose names were not included on voters' lists?
<b>After the Electoral Process</b>	Did registration committees verify the votes received by each candidate?
	Did any candidate reject the announced results?

## DURING THE ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN

<b>Municipalities</b>	Did municipalities specify locations for candidates' advertising?
	Did municipalities interfere with the electoral process?
	Did municipalities influence undermine ballot secrecy?
	Did municipalities advertise for a specific political party or candidate?
	Did municipalities pressure voters?
	Did municipalities allow electoral campaigns to use their locations?
	Were municipal councils used for the benefit of a specific candidate or political party?

## ELECTION DAY

<b>Security Agencies</b>	Did security agencies intervene in the electoral process?
	Did security agencies undermine citizens' right to vote?
	Were security agencies present inside polling stations without a justified request from the head officer?
	Were security agencies deployed around all polling centers?
	Were security agencies deployed in a way that facilitates voters' movement on election day?

## AFTER THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF RESULTS

<b>Judiciary</b>	Did the Constitutional Council receive appeals and decide on them?
	What are the measures and decisions taken by the Court of Publications with regard to violating media outlets referred to it by the Commission?
	Did the Court of Publications comply with the specified deadlines to issue its decisions?

# THE TEAM

## ▶ BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Rony El Assaad, Secretary General
- Adib Mahfouz, Deputy Secretary-General
- Ayman Dandash, Treasurer
- Hussein Assi, Media Secretary
- Farah Bayoumi, Secretary
- Mazen Bou Hamdan

## ▶ EXECUTIVE TEAM

- Aly Sleem, Executive Director
- Dayana El Baba, Senior Projects Coordinator
- Zeinab Rahhal, Finance and Administration Manager
- Cendrella Azar, Media and Communication Coordinator
- Joudi Fatfat, Long Term Observers Coordinator
- Mohammed Gebara, Volunteers and Training Coordinator
- Khaled Saleh, Finance Department
- Raji Keyrouz, Media Department
- Christophe Keyrouz, Researcher
- Youssef Hajj Ali, Data Entry

## ▶ DATA MANAGERS

- Zein Hachem
- Jamila Khodor
- Rawane Ouwayda
- Myriam Harake
- Fatima Dabbous
- Karen Chehadeh
- Serena Kebbeh
- Rayane Nahhas
- Yasma Ouwayda
- Yasmine Nahhas
- Hiba Nahhas

- Fadwa Farhat
- Zeina Awar
- Khaled Khalaf
- Ammar Abboud

## ▶ CONSULTANTS

- Mr. Ziad Baroud
- Dr. Abbas Abou Zeid
- Dr. Rima Adhami
- Mr. Ammar Abboud
- Mr. Georges Rizk
- Ms. Joelle Bou Khalil
- Mr. Elio Najem
- Mr. Youssef Elias

## ▶ TRAINERS OF 2022 ELECTIONS

- Dr. Rima Adhami
- Dr. Abbas Abou Zeid
- Ammar Abboud
- Georges Rizk
- Ahmed Mroueh
- Hassan Othmani
- Tarek Haddad
- Zeina Awar
- Rabih Reaidy
- Christina Ajjoub
- Ibrahim Al Halabi
- Roula Ghemrawi
- Ahmed Maatouk
- Wassim Housheimy
- Hiyam Fakih
- Rachid Hamadto
- Amani El Housheimy
- Mohammed Itani
- Bashar Hamzeh
- Mohammed Abdul Sater

## ► DISTRICTS COORDINATOR

- Hanna Hanna	Akkar District
- Nawal Bechara	Batroun District
- Georges Tawk	Becharreh District
- Peter Mahfouz	Koura District
- Roula Ghemrawi	Mineh-Doniyeh District
- Christina El-Rehban	Zgharta District
- Haroun Smaida	Tripoli District
- Ahmed Maatouk	Nabatiyeh District
- Loubna Ajram	West Bekaa-Rachaya District
- Rabih Houcheimy	Zahle District
- Walid Batakji	Saida 1
- Ola Khalifeh	Saida 2
- Jawad Bou Ghannam	Aley District
- Mohammed Itani	Beirut 1 District
- Amani Houcheimy	Beirut 2 district
- Said El-Natour	Tyre District
- Christina Ajjoub	Maten District
- Hiam El-Fakih	Hermel District
- Lora Thebian	Shouf District
- Rabih Reaidy	Kesserouan-Byblos District
- Myriam Hammoud	Bint Jbeil District
- Halim Mourad	Jezzine District
- Jean-Paul Meamary	Baabda District
- Dalia El-Mokdad	Southern Suburb of Beirut District
- Mohammed Abdul Sater	Baalbeck 1 District
- Bachar Hamzeh	Baalbeck 2 District
- Ibrahim Halabi	Marjea'youn Hasbaya District



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**LADE**  
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