

LADE Warns of a Third Postponement of the Municipal Elections: The Authority Must Hold Elections on Time

Following two postponements, Lebanese municipal and mukhtar elections should take place by May 2024. The political authority, citing insubstantial justifications, extended the terms of the municipal councils twice, first in 2022 due to scheduling conflicts with parliamentary elections and then in 2023 citing financial challenges.

However, the significance of this electoral obligation seems to be overlooked by political authorities, except the decision of the Parliamentary Finance and Budget Committee to allocate one billion Lebanese pounds from the budget reserve to the Ministry of Interior for the holding of municipal elections, and thus “removing the financial justification for hindering the holding of the elections,” as announced by the head of the committee, MP Ibrahim Kanaan.

The Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections - LADE calls on the political authority to conduct the elections on time, without any delays, for various reasons, the most important of which are:

1. The necessity of respecting the constitution, laws, democratic principles, and popular representation.
2. The essential need for municipal councils to address the severe consequences of multiple crises on citizens.

However, it is apparent to LADE that there is a tendency to exploit Israeli attacks on southern Lebanon as a pretext for a third extension of municipal councils mandate. While LADE expresses full solidarity with the people of the south against the ongoing Israeli attacks, it emphasizes that postponing the elections for the third consecutive time does not serve the southern residents in any way but deprives them and all Lebanese of active participation in electing those councils, whether through nomination or voting.

LADE recalls the role that elected councils should play, in case of holding elections, in confronting the crises that have been escalating since 2019, including the recent Israeli attacks that displaced a significant number of the residents of the south and destroyed its productive sectors, including agriculture, industry, trade, and independent professions, in addition to disrupting the academic year in universities, schools, and institutes in the southern areas.

Therefore, LADE emphasizes the importance of having municipal councils that mirror the aspirations of all Lebanese and address the consequences of the various crises, including the Israeli attacks.

From this perspective, LADE calls on the authority in all its components to find appropriate solutions for conducting municipal elections on one hand, and for dealing with the consequences of the war in southern Lebanon on the other hand, instead of using the suffering of the southern residents as a political pretext to justify another extension.

In the same context, LADE rejects the use of the presidential vacuum once again to postpone municipal elections, considering that obstructing the democratic process at the presidential level should not be reflected in other democratic paths, specifically at the local level.

Therefore, LADE emphasizes the necessity of respecting the legal deadlines associated with conducting municipal elections, starting with the call for elections by the Minister of Interior and Municipalities, opening the door for candidacy and withdrawal, and conducting the elections in May, before the end of the current term of municipal and mukhtar councils.

**Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections
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