



شبكة الانتخابات في العالم العربي

Elections Network in the Arab Region

Preliminary report on the Lebanese parliamentary elections

Beirut, May 16, 2022,

Elections are held according to the constitutional calendar, and turnout rates are satisfactory, notwithstanding a problem of procedural inequity, as well as challenges from political money and election violence.

Introduction:

Since its establishment in 2006, the Arab Election Network aims to promote democracy, respect for human rights, and the rule of law through its observation of elections in Arab countries. It also seeks to stimulate popular engagement in the electoral process and to develop electoral structures to guarantee the conduct of free and fair elections based on the principle that the people are the source of power.

All network missions observed 27 elections in ten Arab countries, including Lebanon, adhered to the "Declaration of International Principles for Election Observation" and adhered to impartiality and non-interference principles in the conduct of the electoral process.

44 international observers of the network were approved by the Ministry of the Interior and Municipalities' election monitoring authority. Observers from the network visited the various voting machines for a variety of electoral districts. On Sunday, May 15, 2022, the network's observer teams were deployed to their respective constituencies in which 128 members of the Lebanese Parliament will be elected in the governorates of Beirut, Mount Lebanon, the North, the South, and the Beqaa.

The network teams also observed the progress of the electoral process in (56) polling stations and (142) electoral polls during the opening, voting, and counting periods. There were both positive and negative observations recorded.

After the conclusion of the appeals phase, the network will issue a detailed report on the entire electoral process, including the legislative environment and the importance of a more just law for Lebanese elections, as well as the existence of an independent body with full legal personality to manage the electoral process.

Notably, the network's activities were completed in collaboration with a local partner in Lebanon, Basma International Group, which was represented by Dr. Golshan Soglam and the work team.

In addition to a number of concerns/violations, the monitoring process highlighted positive aspects of the voting process on election day, such as:



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Positives:

1. Holding parliamentary elections on time and according to the constitution's schedule.
2. The elections were held in a relatively peaceful and secure environment, while there were some concerns recorded across the country.
3. Allowing large numbers of delegates from various lists and candidates to attend voting stations and electoral centers both inside and outside the country.
4. Provides complete transparency regarding the instructions and processes for the electoral process and voting, particularly in terms of electoral information and guidance available on websites and within polling stations.
5. With the exception of a few polling stations, the opening of polling stations on time, the presence of the required number of workers, and the provision of basic voting necessities.
6. Publish the list of voters' names in front of each polling station.
7. Take immediate action in response to some violations that have been reported to the process's authorities.
8. With the exception of some cases involving the exclusion of observers from the Lebanese LADY network, participation of local and international civil society in the election observation process is considered a positive indicator for improving the electoral level in order to reach international standards for successful elections.
9. For the most part, polling stations were divided according to international norms, which stipulated a maximum of 400 voters per polling station.

Violations and breaches:

1. The use of electoral propaganda by candidates and their supporters on election day, both outside and within polling stations, without adopting preventive steps to avoid such legal violations that affect the integrity of the voters' voting process, as well as breaking the electoral silence.
2. Non-compliance with voting behind the voting booth instructions in some centers, as well as a lack of respect for secrecy and the restriction of check-out regulations to the names of voters of one sect, endangers the principle of ballot secrecy and makes it easier to know who voted for whom in each electoral station.
3. The skill level of poll workers varied, as did their diligence in following the opening, polling, sorting, and counting processes, resulting in inadvertent delays.
4. Electoral violence, involving supporters of electoral lists and rival candidates attacking candidates and delegates of electoral lists or candidates in various locations.



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5. In most voting stations, there is a lack of accessibility for people with disabilities, the elderly, and the sick, as well as an issue with placing the polling station on the top floor.
6. Due to a shortage of space and the ongoing problem of power outages, several election centers were chosen in a way that was inconsistent with the principles of organizing the electoral process.
7. Voters queued for more than an hour at certain polling sites and in front of polling stations, which is considered a considerable time, especially during the last hours of voting.
8. The voting locations are more than 500 meters away from the voters' homes, causing some voters, particularly the elderly and the sick, to miss the election.
9. Some polling places' camera technology stopped operating, while others did not implement it.
10. Local observers were not allowed to complete the monitoring process and were excluded from various polling locations and polling stations.

Recommendations

1. The authority should take seriously the registration of complaints, appeals, and breaches, and takes the required steps in line with the law and regulations.
2. Implementing procedures to ensure that candidates and regulations follow the electoral silence rules and do not continue their campaign on the day of the general election, as well as the application of international standards prohibiting electoral campaigning within 100 meters of electoral centers.
3. The political parties and candidates must accept the results and will of the voters in their selection and resort to legal and peaceful methods when objecting or having complaints and appeals about the conduct of the electoral process.
4. Taking the international and local election monitoring teams' reports and observations into consideration in order to analyze and enhance the electoral process and take the related necessary and essential measures.
5. Reconsidering the exclusion lists so that the names of voters from other sects are combined rather than being limited and identified to one faith or sect.
6. Preparing polling stations in accordance with international standards in a way that ensures justice in determining the number of voters in polling stations, and in a manner that facilitates the task of voters in reaching the polling site so that the distance is not more than 500 meters from their place of residence
7. Empowering staff and providing specific training to improve their ability to manage polling and counting activities.



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Initial conclusion: The network's observer team confirms that the polling and counting processes took place in general in accordance with the law and applicable procedures, and that international standards were adopted in the elections in terms of transparency, universality, directness and partial secrecy.

This is an indication of the availability of the minimum conditions required for free elections. The violations, irregularities and deficiencies that were registered on the day of polling did not seriously affect the integrity of the voting process.

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