

The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) has deployed an international observation mission for the Lebanese parliamentary elections scheduled to take place on June 7, 2009. Below is the second in a series of election updates that will be published on a weekly basis until the election.

Candidate Withdrawal Deadline

April 22 marked a day of important decision making for the June polls; candidates were forced to decide whether they would forge ahead in their campaigns, and parties made tough decisions in establishing their lists in many districts. The final number of candidates after the deadline for candidate withdrawal passed stands at 587, 115 less than the original figure. Nassib Lahoud, leader of the Democratic Renewal Movement (DRM) and current Minister of State, surprised many Lebanese when he bowed out of the race, citing political horse-trading in the formation of electoral lists. Former House Speaker Hussein Husseini, an independent Shia, also withdrew his bid for a seat in Baalbek-Hermel.



New winners emerged as their competitors walked away from the race. Two Armenians, former Minister Arthur Nazarian (March 8) and Sebouh Kalbakian (March 14), won seats in the Beirut II district. At Doha, it was agreed that all four seats in Beirut II would be split evenly between March 14 (1 Sunni and 1 Armenian Orthodox) and March 8 (1 Shia and 1 Armenian Orthodox), but despite efforts by Future Movement and Hezbollah to convince their allies to withdraw their candidacies, the race will be competitive because independent candidates did not withdraw.

Observation Update

International Observation:

- On April 26, the European Union deployed its core team of election observers to Lebanon. The team is headed by EU Parliamentarian Jose Ignacio Salafranca Sanchez-Neyra, and will be joined by around 100 observers in time for election day.
- Now four weeks in the field, NDI's long term observers, have been attending political rallies and meeting with candidates, governors, election administrators, members of civil society, and academics.
- The Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE) took the lead in coordinating domestic and international observation efforts by convening a working session with the three international observation missions currently on the ground- NDI, the Carter Center, and the European Union.



Rabih al-Chaer, an advisor to the Minister of the Interior, leads NDI's LTOs on a tour of SCEC.

Domestic Observation:

On April 24, the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE), which is organizing Lebanon's largest-ever domestic monitoring effort, held a press conference to release its first pre-election monitoring report. LADE reported 63 observed violations, nine of which have been validated. All validated violations breached one of three articles of the electoral law: 59: financial donations (service provisions and cash payments); 68: libel, slander, or defamation of a candidate in the media; 71: use of public space for campaigning. The report named specific offenders, including high-profile politicians, such as Nabih Berri, Saad Hariri, Gebran Bassil, and Sleiman Frangieh.

Over the past few weeks, LADE also finished opening all of its regional field offices throughout the country. There are now 26 operating offices (one in each district), responsible for long term observation and the recruitment and training of election day observers.



LADE press conference (left to right), Chaker Noon General Manager of Baldati, Ziad Abdul Samad, General-Secretary of LADE, Gilbert Doumit, General Coordinator for Elections LADE, and Faysal Abdel Sater, Board Member of LADE

District in Focus: Jezzine

Seat Distribution:

- 2 Maronite
- 1 Greek Catholic



Major Political Players:

- March-14:** Kataeb Party – Salem family
- March-8:** Local political figures (MP Samir Azar) – Free Patriotic Movement – Hezbollah in the Shia villages of the district.

Analysts consider Jezzine, a predominantly Christian district in a region where Amal and Hezbollah are also prominent, to be critical in deciding the outcome of the election. Because the new electoral law gives the district three Christian seats, whereas under the previous law it was part of a larger predominantly Muslim district, both blocs are focusing their attention on the Christian vote. For the opposition, this development has led to a heated battle between Free Patriotic Movement leader and MP General Michel Aoun and Amal leader and Speaker of the Parliament Nabih Berri. The clash centers on the whether MP Samir Azar, a prominent local politician and member of the opposition will be included on March 8's list. Berri insists on Azar's inclusion, but Aoun, who is seeking to form an exclusively FPM list, rejects it. If Aoun prevails, Azar may form a third, independent list, which could split March 8's votes and could benefit March 14.

<p>Total Voters: 53,380</p> <p>Muslim Voters: 11,805 (22.1%) Shia: 10,375 (19.4%) Other: 1,430 (2.7%)</p> <p>Christian Voters: 41,575 (77.9%) Maronite: 33,187 (62.3%) Greek Catholic: 8,195 (15.3%) Other: 193 (0.3%)</p> <p>2008 Figures</p>



By the Numbers

- 587** Final number of candidates in the race;
- 115** Number of candidates that withdrew between April 7 and April 22, 2009;
- 5:1** Ratio of candidates to parliamentary seats;
- 38** Number of days left until the election;
- 63** Number of violations reported by LADE;
- 9** Number of violations validated by LADE;
- 1** Number of electoral complaints filed to the Supervisory Commission on Electoral Campaigns; Nayla Tuani, Independent Greek Orthodox candidate for Beirut I, is suing Free Patriotic Movement media for news falsification, sedition and for breaching all legal rules during electoral campaigns.

SCEC Begins its Monitoring Activity

On April 7, the Supervisory Commission on Electoral Campaigns (SCEC) officially began monitoring candidates' campaign spending and media coverage. At right is a member of the SCEC media monitoring team measuring print media coverage.



Quotable



"When I used to call you to death you did not delay. How is it today when I call you to vote?"

~Samir Geagea, leader of the Lebanese Forces (as quoted in the Daily Star on April 21, 2009.)

Ad Watch- Campaigns Target Women Voters

Campaign posters continue to sprout up throughout the country, and various political parties are targeting women with different approaches. Below are examples of posters from the Free Patriotic Movement and Kataeb aimed at female voters.

FPM poster (right) appealing to Lebanese women to "Be beautiful and vote." This poster puts a clever spin on the French expression "Sois belle et tais-toi" or "Be beautiful and shut up."



Kataeb poster (below) stating that "Our mission is ensuring your stability, our means is the Parliament."



Free Patriotic Movement Campaign Song



<http://www.vcoderz.com/forum/showthread.php?t=15173>

Take His Money and Vote Against Him

By Ghassan Rahbani

Go back to your country at his expense; he made you leave
Teach your kids at his expense; he stole from you
Treat yourself at his expense; he made you sick
Take from him paternal aid; he made you starve
It is not wrong to cheat a cheater
It is not a sin to steal from a thief
It is not wrong to lie to a liar
Deal with him as he deals with you
This is your only chance to take revenge
And if he asks you to vote for him tell him what he used to tell you that consider it done
And before you put the envelope in the box, don't think about yourself
Think about what he did to your parents
And imagine what he will do to your kids
June is the change

Resources

The Ministry of the Interior's newly launched website, which serves as a resource for voters candidates, election administrators, and observers:
<http://www.elections.gov.lb/>

The Lebanese Associations for Democratic Elections' official election observation website (Arabic- English site coming soon)
<http://www.observe.ladeleb.org/>

"Elections Simulator" by the Civil Campaign for Electoral Reform, which allows you to play out various electoral outcomes and compare Lebanon's newest electoral law to past iterations:
<http://www.ccerlebanon.org/>

In the News:

- <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/23/world/middleeast/23lebanon.html?ref=middleeast>
- <http://www.nowlebanon.com/NewsArticleDetails.aspx?ID=89588>
- http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_id=1&categ_id=2&article_id=101432
- http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/27/world/middleeast/27dipl.html?_r=1&ref=middleeast

If you have received this email in error or would otherwise like to unsubscribe, please reply to this email with unsubscribe in the subject line or body.