



LEBANON MAY 2022 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION STUDY MISSION

Final Report



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The National Democratic Institute (NDI) expresses appreciation to the Lebanese political and civic leaders with whom it met, including government officials, candidates, election commissioners, nonpartisan citizen observers, and poll workers for their insights that facilitated the work of NDI's election study delegates and staff. The Institute would also like to thank the Supervisory Commission on Elections (SCE) of Lebanon for the timely accreditation of NDI's observers and for its cooperation throughout all phases of the electoral process. NDI extends its gratitude to the short-term study mission observers, long-term analysts, and pre-election assessment mission delegates for their time, expertise, and leadership. The Institute would like to thank the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) for funding the mission and supporting NDI's democracy assistance programs in Lebanon. Most importantly, NDI is grateful to the Lebanese people for their cooperation and hospitality.

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MISSION DESCRIPTION

The National Democratic Institute (NDI) organized an International Election Study Mission to monitor pre-election preparations, Election Day, and the post-election period for the May 15, 2022 Parliamentary Elections in Lebanon. The main objective of the mission was to thoroughly study the electoral process – including the prevailing political environment, the electoral campaigns, the casting and counting of ballots on Election Day and the post-election period — in order to demonstrate the commitment of the international community in the development of a democratic political process in Lebanon, assess Lebanon's compliance with international electoral standards and commitments, and make recommendations to strengthen Lebanon's electoral process.

In February 2022, NDI assembled a group of experts to form a virtual pre-election assessment mission (V-PEAM),¹ including technical and election experts from Canada, Georgia, the United States, and Jordan. The purpose of the V-PEAM was to assess the prevailing political environment and preparations for the upcoming elections and identify areas where change was needed to improve the integrity, transparency, and effectiveness of the elections. The findings in this report build on the efforts of the V-PEAM.

In April, NDI deployed a Long Term Analyst (LTA) to observe the pre-election developments and a second LTA to coordinate study mission delegates on Election Day. On May 15, NDI's delegation, consisting of NDI staff, political leaders and experienced electoral process experts, were deployed to 12 districts of Lebanon to observe the opening, setting up, closing, and counting procedures at 12 polling stations, and the voting procedures at 136 polling stations throughout Election Day. NDI's Lebanon team was on site during the entire process to support the work of the election study delegates and LTAs.

The parliamentary elections were officially observed by the European Union (EU) and EU parliamentary delegation; the Organization Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF); and the Arab Network for Democratic Elections (ANDE). Domestic monitoring group and NDI's longstanding partner, the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE), deployed domestic observers at polling stations throughout the country. NDI's partner, the Lebanese Union for People with Physical Disabilities (LUPD), deployed 232 domestic observers to monitor the accessibility of the polling stations for persons with disabilities (PWDs). NDI's third main partner, the Lebanese Transparency Association, conducted a comprehensive monitoring of the campaign finances during the entire electoral cycle.

¹ The final V-PEAM report can be found at <https://www.ndi.org/publications/virtual-pre-election-assessment-mission-state-ment-lebanon>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In May, 49.2 percent of Lebanese voters, in Lebanon and outside the country, went to the polls to elect a new parliament. An unprecedented number of Lebanese from 59 countries registered to vote out-of-country. The election results brought modest but potentially meaningful changes, with Hezbollah and its allies (Amal, Free Patriotic Movement, and other members of parliament (MPs)) losing their majority—from 71 to 62 MPs— and 13 MPs getting elected from emerging groups and civil society lists— an achievement in a sectarian electoral system that favors the established political parties. Additionally, eight women were elected, an increase from six in 2018.

The months preceding the elections were marked by uncertainty, with domestic and international observers unsure if elections would take place on time or at all. The lack of commitment from the government to implement elections resulted in delayed preparations for elections and inequalities among candidates. Furthermore, the lack of funding allocated for elections did not adequately cover the costs for administering the elections. Even after Election Day, the Supervisory Commission for Elections (SCE) did not receive the allocated budget for proper functioning. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) played a sizable role in filling in the gaps of funding and providing technical support for the administration of elections.



Despite these challenges, election authorities successfully implemented elections on May 15, 2022 as scheduled by the December 28, 2021 governmental decree. Various shortcomings of the electoral process underscored the need for Lebanese authorities to strengthen the institutions that undergird electoral integrity.

Fundamental freedoms were generally respected according to NDI's impressions and reports of observer groups, but voter and candidate intimidation along with the issue of rampant vote-buying occurred during the campaign period and on Election Day. Several analysts noted that the decision of the government to not implement "mega centers" (voting locations in populated areas that would allow citizens to vote without traveling to their ancestral villages) before the election made voters more vulnerable to vote buying and intimidation. This consistent pattern of intimidation affected the conduct of the campaign and the election outcomes. In some regions, intimidation limited the ability of candidates to reach and engage with their constituents. In other regions, candidates felt pressure to withdraw from the electoral race. Overall, these tactics reduced voters' ability to make a free and informed choice on Election Day.

During campaign season, the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities (MoIM) and relevant state institutions (law enforcement bodies and the judiciary) should address instances of violence, pressure and intimidation towards candidates, activists, voters, observers, election workers, and other stakeholders. Furthermore, to more closely adhere to typical international practices, campaign activities, offline and online, should be prohibited on Election Day. Campaign materials, including flags, T-shirts, and all materials with colors or logos of political parties or candidates, should be forbidden in polling stations and polling centers. Even though the Lebanese election law provides clear criteria about where pre-election campaigning could be carried out, misuse of state resources was noted by domestic and international observers. Candidates used public premises for campaigning and displayed party posters and flags using banner holders at municipal facilities. These tactics may have granted an excessive advantage to the dominant parties within the municipalities to the detriment of their competitors.

The election management body responsible for the conduct and organization of the elections should be a permanent and independent institution, free of any political affiliation. In the meantime, the SCE should be granted full financial and administrative autonomy from the MoIM so it can carry out its duty of monitoring the conduct of the campaign. Currently, the role of the SCE is limited to the monitoring of media's compliance with campaign regulations and the adherence to campaign finance rules by candidates and lists. However, the delay in forming the SCE and providing a budget allocation undermined the SCE's capacity to effectively fulfill its mandate. Furthermore, as a result of the financial and economic crisis, there was no applicable and verifiable limit of campaign expenditures for candidates and parties. The SCE and monitoring groups lacked the capacity to track cash payments and determining the value of the amounts actually spent became impossible due to hyperinflation.

More effective support for marginalized communities, including people with disabilities (PWD) and women is necessary. The MoIM, the Ministry of Education (MoE), and the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) should ensure that PWDs can exercise their constitutional right to vote independently with dignity. Measures to be adopted should include ensuring access to polling centers, setting polling stations on the ground floor for people with physical disabilities, provision of ballot papers in braille script, and adapted ballot booths. In the 2022 elections, the election administration, despite the objectives announced by the Minister of Interior, was unable to ensure accessibility in the vast majority of polling stations. For women, the participation of

155 women candidates² in the election process clearly demonstrated the readiness and the willingness of Lebanese women to be present in the legislative institution of the country. However, the pre-election period was marred by instances of psychological and sexual violence, including threats toward women candidates, especially on social media.

Voter education should take place early on in the election process and at a larger scale. It should include targeted efforts towards different groups such as the diaspora, first time voters, elderly, women, and PWDs. Without comprehensive government-led civic and voter education for the 2022 elections, the gap was filled by the UNDP, the international community and domestic non-governmental organizations. Despite the considerable efforts made by civil society representatives and some media outlets, persistent confusion among voters indicated the need for a prolonged education period and an increased scale of activities. To add to this, media coverage of the election process and of the candidates' campaigns was varied and unequal. Private broadcasters, which are the most popular media outlets in Lebanon, set high fees for candidate coverage, which limited accessibility for candidates with scarce financial resources, especially those not affiliated to the major parties. This resulted in lower voter awareness about the platforms of respective candidates and parties and hampered voters' informed choices.

2 Of the 155 women candidates, 118 were placed on official lists.

POLITICAL CONTEXT

Lebanon's political environment is plagued with conflict between historically powerful political parties and clientelism. Citizens' discontent with the government is further compounded by the current humanitarian crisis. Lebanon is suffering from high unemployment, a lack of basic services (electricity, water, and internet), a continued devaluation of the Lebanese pound, and increasingly high rates of inflation. Strict limits to cash withdrawals imposed by banks have only exacerbated an already complex economic situation and further diminished citizens' trust in the banking system. Government negligence following the August 2020 Beirut port explosion has worsened the economic and social conditions and fueled further public resentment against the government and the established political parties. As a result, tens of thousands of Lebanese have left the country.

Clientelism in Lebanon perpetuates a system in which political elites who hold power and resources continue to benefit while the rest of the country suffers. Increased anger against the corruption of the government and its poor public management and service delivery led to a massive popular uprising that began on October 17, 2019. The protest movement quickly grew more prominent, with estimates of more than a million participants. Demonstrators remained mobilized for several months with marches and sit-ins. As a result of these protests, Saad Hariri's government resigned at the end of October, and was eventually replaced by Hassan Diab's government in February 2020. Initially focused on the economic and social grievances common to all citizens regardless of their political and confessional affiliation, the protest movement manifested a rejection of the political establishment and the sectarian system while elevating ideas for a technocratic civil state.

Following the Beirut port explosion in August 2020, Diab's government resigned and Hariri was nominated again as Prime Minister. After a year-long negotiation to form the government, Hariri was unable to reach consensus with the major political players and resigned as the nominated-Prime Minister. In August 2021, Najib Mikati was nominated as the new Prime Minister and was able to form a government and receive a vote of confidence from the parliament. In his nomination speech, Mikati stated that holding parliamentary elections was a priority for his government. He initially proved this commitment by opening out of country online voter registration for the Lebanese diaspora on time.

In January, former Prime Minister Saad Hariri announced he would suspend his political career and urged candidates in his Future Movement not to run as representatives of the Future Movement in the next parliamentary elections. Hariri was supported by most of the MPs in his political party; his departure essentially created a void in Sunni leadership.

In the lead-up to the elections, 59.3 percent of Lebanese respondents, according to NDI's March 2022 public opinion poll, said they would vote in the May 15 elections. This coupled with encouragement from the international community led to the Lebanese government implementing the elections on time, despite rumors that the elections would be delayed.

PRE-ELECTION OBSERVATION

ELECTION ADMINISTRATION AND PREPARATION

The MoIM is the primary body responsible for administering the elections, in coordination with the Ministries of Justice, Foreign Affairs, Education, and Finance. The MoIM is in charge of preparing the voter lists, organizing trainings for polling staff, setting up polling stations, and providing supplies and equipment, as well as coordinating security on Election Day. Under the authority of the MoIM, the SCE is an eleven-member regulatory body tasked with monitoring candidates' compliance with campaign finance and advertising regulations, and accrediting observers and media representatives. For the 2022 parliamentary elections, the nine SCE members appointed in 2018 remained and three new members joined the board.

Election preparations began very late. Originally expected to take place in March, the finalized election date was decided as May 15 to provide enough time for preparations. In late February, the Cabinet of Ministers agreed on a budget of 18 million USD (360 billion LBP) compared to 54 million USD spent on the 2018 elections. Even at this greatly reduced level of expenditure, the parliament voted for the budget on March 29, 2022. Due to the devaluation of Lebanese currency, the budget allocated for elections decreased in value and reached its lowest exchange rate in USD by May.



The SCE received its mandate on February 25, 2022. On February 26, the SCE issued a statement announcing the launch of its activities. The SCE depends on the MoIM for financial and administrative resources and is limited in its executive and sanctioning power. Therefore, due to the lack of a budget, human resources, basic equipment, and supplies, the SCE was only able to start its activities with the financial support of the UNDP at the end of March. The UNDP covered the expenses related to renting the temporary office and the salaries of media monitors and clerks. According to the SCE, they did not receive any funding from the Ministry even after conducting elections in May. The SCE noted that without the support of UNDP, they would not have been able to carry out their activities.

The SCE issued 5,047 accreditations for candidate agents, local and international observers and media representatives. The process of accreditation was inclusive and timely. The SCE published around 30 decrees and circulars to clarify campaign rules and media regulations. According to various interlocutors, some information related to the candidate application process lacked clear instructions. The public information provided on the election preparations by the MoIM was insufficient and often delayed³. The MoIM published all information in static format (PDF), making any analysis and deeper exploration of the available information a difficult and complicated endeavor. The reluctance of the MoIM to communicate with stakeholders, including international observers, raised concerns and doubts about key aspects of the electoral process and its transparency.

For the 2022 parliamentary elections, the MoIM set up 6,836 polling stations throughout the country and assigned a minimum of two officials to administer each polling station. According to Article 84 of the Lebanese electoral law, the number of registered voters should not exceed 600 in each polling station.

Due to logistical and financial constraints, the MoIM decided not to conduct in-person training sessions for the polling staff members and instead delivered video instructions, produced with support from UNDP, on WhatsApp or email. The polling staff received hard copies of manuals and other supplies on the morning of Election Day. The UNDP provided all polling stations with the essential election materials and equipment, including polling booths, ballot boxes, and LED lamps. The ballot papers were funded by the MoIM.

During the election preparation process, the MoIM faced challenges with ensuring electricity supply for the polling and tabulation centers on Election Day. The Ministry could not afford to cover the bill of the state electricity company, and therefore instructed the local administrations to use generators from private sources.

VOTER REGISTRATION AND ACCESSIBILITY

According to the Lebanese Constitution, every resident or non-resident, male or female Lebanese citizen may exercise their right to vote at the age of 21. In contrast to the more typical voting age of 18, the Lebanese law excludes a large number of citizens that otherwise participate in election processes as supporters or volunteers. The law also disenfranchises people convicted of various offenses and military personnel of all ranks and divisions.

³ For example, the change of a polling center for OCV was published only after Election Day.

For the 2022 parliamentary elections, the MoIM updated voter lists based on civil status records and allowed voters to check their information from February 10 through March 10 on their website. The voter registry closed on March 30, with 3,967,507 voters successfully registered, including 50.97 percent women.

The Lebanese law requires voters to vote in the village or city of their initial registration – typically an ancestral town or village. Voters do have the option to change their place of registration, however, due to the complicated and lengthy process it takes, it is uncommon for voters to re-register to vote elsewhere. Many voters no longer reside in their ancestral registration places and need to return to their towns or villages to vote on Election Day. The economic crisis in Lebanon has skyrocketed fuel prices, in turn making travel from the current city of residence to their village of origin expensive and potentially impossible.

One possible solution, often raised by various interlocutors, for accessibility problems and the many challenges of having to travel to ancestral villages to vote was the implementation of mega centers. Mega centers, an initiative to allow voters to vote in nine convenient and populous “mega” locations, rather than returning to the village of their initial registration, have long been presented as a desirable election reform to facilitate access to a greater number of voters and to reduce intimidation and fraud on Election Day. Many interlocutors supported the use of mega centers and argued that they would increase the accessibility and fairness of the election process in Lebanon. However, the MoIM declared that mega centers would be impossible to implement for the 2022 elections due to financial, logistical, and political impediments.

REGISTRATION OF CANDIDATES

Registration for candidates technically opened on January 10 by decree of the MoIM. However, as a result of bank closures, the process did not begin until the Central Bank of Lebanon instructed banks to facilitate the opening of accounts for candidates on February 10. By March 15, 1,043 candidates submitted their candidacies (888 men and 155 women) to the MoIM. The law mandates all candidates to be part of a list formed according to the confessional distribution of seats in the electoral district. The MoIM registered 103 lists, with 718 candidates running (including 118 women).

When the MoIM approved the final lists on April 4, a significant number of withdrawals took place. This was primarily because candidates failed to find a seat on a list, but also due to pressure not to run – an experience reported by several potential female candidates in Beirut, Bekaa, and Mount Lebanon. A number of candidates challenging the incumbent force in their constituency were subjected to family and political pressure and several of them withdrew after the registration deadline, leaving their list incomplete⁴. An entire “change” list withdrew in Beirut II, and called voters to support the remaining anti-establishment list. In line with the law, candidates who withdrew after the registration period closed still appeared on ballots on Election Day.

All the parties represented in parliament ran for re-election, except for the Future Movement, whose leader, Saad Hariri, had instructed a boycott of the election process. Many lists were ad hoc coalitions formed from political parties or movements that differ in their ideological stances. Over 37 lists that represent

4 The most prominent cases were two Shi'a candidates on a coalition list led by the Lebanese Forces running against the Hezbollah-Amal coalition in Baalbek-Hermel, as reported in *l'Orient Le Jour*. Women candidates of the same region, and other candidates on civil society change lists in the South and in Beirut, were pressured to withdraw throughout the election process.



new emerging groups emanating from the October 17, 2019 uprising or 2016 protests ran under the label of “change”. These anti-establishment forces were unable to form a united front and entered the competition divided into various lists in all the districts, except in South III where one single “change” list competed against the long-lasting incumbent Hezbollah-Amal coalition.

CAMPAIGN ENVIRONMENT

The campaign period began with the registration of candidates on January 10 and ended on May 14 at midnight. The law mandates a silence period, prohibiting candidates from appearing or making statements on the media or social media. There were three silence periods: on May 5, before out-of-country voting; on May 11, before voting day for polling staff; and on May 14, before the general Election Day.

Campaigning was active and intensified towards the end of the period. Candidates used billboards, posters, banners, flags, vehicles with loudspeakers, campaign stands, door-to-door canvassing, rallies and festivals, traditional media, and social media to promote their campaigns. Established political parties organized large rallies for their candidates. Candidates from emerging groups particularly relied on social media networks to attract youth and communicate with voters abroad due to their scarce resources and limited access to the Lebanese media. As the pre-election period coincided with the month of Ramadan, in predominantly Muslim areas, candidates were limited to campaigning in the evenings, after the traditional iftar. In Christian-majority regions, the Catholic and Orthodox Easter celebrations took place over two weekends and sometimes coincided with campaign activities.

Civil society and independent candidates focused their campaigns on the fight against corruption and “the system,”⁵ the financial crisis, and the need for a functioning state. Established parties largely mobilized their voters with identity-based or sectarian discourses, appealing to traditional loyalties⁶. Emerging groups played on cross-cutting issues and proposed a broad set of changes in the political representation system, including decentralization, healthcare and judiciary reform, civil marriage, and a proposal for a secular state.

Many candidates used emotionally charged rhetoric against each other, with two main sides emerging– the “sulta” (the “power in place,” associated with the established political parties, including Hezbollah), and the “thawra” (the “revolution” associated with civil society movements and groups emerging from the October 2019 protests). The Hezbollah-Amal campaigns continued to utilize “resistance” and Hezbollah’s weapons as main themes of their campaign, while the Lebanese Forces and like-minded groups used “sovereignty” and the Army’s control over weapons.

The campaign period was peaceful overall but during the last few weeks of the election, a number of incidents occurred, including a list launch event that was interrupted by gunshots⁷ and physical aggression which mainly affected candidates and supporters of opposition and emerging lists in the Southern and Bekaa districts⁸. A number of Shi’a candidates and their allies running against Hezbollah-Amal lists in these same districts faced different forms of pressure and intimidation meant to lead them to withdraw⁹, as well as repeated smear campaigns calling them “foreign agents,” “US or Israeli spies,” “Zionists,” and “traitors to Lebanon and to the resistance,” including messages that bordered on incitement to violence¹⁰. Several candidates running with emerging group lists in the south informed NDI of the threats and insults they received in person, by phone or through text, and on social media accounts. Women candidates also received sexist insults.

Following a consistent pattern across Lebanon, civil society “change” list candidates in stronghold areas of leading political forces faced intimidation, and the long-standing dominance of one-party in these areas limited access to voters. Districts ruled by one party or coalition¹¹ for several years has created a climate of pressure, intimidation and sometimes fear, negatively impacting the freedom of speech and of assembly of candidates and voters. Candidates and leaders of emerging lists running in Beirut I, Beirut II, Bekaa III, Mount Lebanon III and Mount Lebanon IV, North II, South II and South III reported obstruction to or cancelation

5 In the discourse of civil society movements, the “system” mainly refers to the political system and public administration of Lebanon, as well as to the seven main parties that have ruled the country since the end of the civil war through their representation in parliament, local assemblies and government. These seven parties are the Free Patriotic Movement, the Amal Movement, Hezbollah, the Lebanese Forces, Kataeb, the Progressive Socialist Party, and the Future Movement.

6 Some referred to the events of the Lebanese civil war; others to the war in Syria.

7 In Sarafand (South II – Tyre-Zahrani district), supporters of Amal stopped the campaign launch of the “Together for Change” list, causing a dozen injuries. One of the supporters was detained and convicted based on a video showing him firing a gun.

8 Besides these cases, clashes between local residents and supporters of Gebran Bassil took place during his campaign tour for the FPM in the northern cities of Rahbe and Akkar, and resulted in at least three people injured.

9 Three Shi’a candidates allied to the Lebanese Forces list in Baalbek-Hermel withdrew, reportedly after being pressured.

10 Hate speech and incitement to violence is forbidden in the campaign as Article 74 of the Law 44 stipulates that media, candidates and candidates’ lists “shall refrain from broadcasting material that incites confessional, sectarian or ethnic strife, provokes violence or riots, or promotes terrorism, crime or subversive acts”.

11 In Lebanon, a number of districts are strongholds of one particular political force. There is one dominant party or coalition governing all or most of the municipalities, controlling the local administration with loyal employees, and providing employment and social benefits to the constituents. These dominant political forces also hold most or all of the parliamentary seats in the constituency and will not share representation with new competitors. Baalbek-Hermel is considered to be Hezbollah’s stronghold; South II and III districts are Hezbollah-Amal; Becharre is the Lebanese Forces; and the Chouf is Progressive Party. Small areas in Beirut are considered to be controlled by Tashnag, Hezbollah, Amal, and Saad Hariri’s Future Movement.

of their campaign activities in specific villages and neighborhoods due to intimidation by local authorities¹². Several candidates reported that they were unable to canvas publicly. To avoid possible retaliation, they resorted to surreptitious campaign gatherings in people's homes, one-on-one conversations, and discussions with voters online. These restrictions affected the candidates' ability to campaign freely on an equal footing with other competitors, ultimately limiting their ability to reach constituents and ensure voters are making an informed choice.

Self-censorship was also a central component of the pre-election environment, particularly in the South and Bekaa districts, where some voters expressed that they were afraid to voice criticism of Amal and Hezbollah in public or on social media. In their messages, opposition candidates avoided antagonizing these groups directly or mentioning certain sensitive topics¹³. In some municipalities, public sector employees and beneficiaries of social services, as well as private company employees linked to the local authorities, were requested to demonstrate support and vote for the incumbent party's candidates, or they would lose their job and benefits. These kinds of pressures limited voters' ability to cast votes free of retribution. Lastly, several voters reported that political parties called them and asked who they would vote for and encouraged them to vote for a specific candidate and list. This voter mobilization technique used by the main parties is generally perceived as intrusive and even intimidating in some districts, raising questions about the access to voters' personal data by political entities.

During the pre-election period there were repeated allegations of distributions of monetary and in-kind benefits to the voters by candidates and parties in all the districts. Several citizen observer groups reported incidents of vote-buying and abstention-buying,¹⁴ highlighting how pervasive and entrenched in the clientelistic practices of Lebanese political parties vote-buying is. This is primarily due to the de facto role of parties as service providers in the absence of a functioning state-managed social security net, particularly when represented in local government bodies¹⁵. Vote-buying has grown extensively with the increased levels of poverty in Lebanon. Many political parties and candidates now cover voters' basic necessities, including food and fuel vouchers, school fees, medical treatments, and generators for electricity¹⁶.

The electoral law forbids vote-buying in broad terms,¹⁷ but at the same time legally endorses gifts and donations from candidates or parties' charities if they are given "on a regular and consistent basis for at

12 According to the candidates interviewed, canvassing activities and gatherings could not be held for a few reasons: hosts and owners of the venue were forced to cancel their invitation; candidates and campaign staff were denied access to or expelled from the neighborhood when distributing flyers; or the voters did not want to be seen in public with the candidates and preferred to keep their support a secret in the community.

13 The establishment of a civil state, the option of civil marriage, and the total disarmament of all militias including Hezbollah are taboo topics in Bekaa and South Lebanon. Some candidates who met NDI mentioned that the assassination of the Shi'a activist, Lokman Slim, in February 2021 instilled fear in the Shi'a community and led citizens to refrain from questioning the ideological line of Hezbollah-Amal or criticize their leaders in public.

14 Abstention-buying consists of confiscating the ID document of voters of the opponents in exchange for money or benefits prior to Election Day.

15 The role of political parties in the distribution of municipal aid and subsidies is evidenced by the research brief published by the Policy Initiative, "Reenergizing Clientelist channels- which municipalities abused aid forms?", 24 May 2021.

16 74% of the Lebanese population live under the poverty line, according the latest UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) policy brief, "Multidimensional Poverty in Lebanon: Painful Reality and Uncertain Prospects", 3 September 2021, https://www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/news/docs/21-00634-_multidimensional_poverty_in_lebanon_policy_brief_.en.pdf, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/09/1099102>.

17 Commitments and disbursements that involve the provision of services or payments to voters shall be prohibited during the electoral campaign period (Art. 62).

least three years before the campaign period”¹⁸ and the total amount does not exceed the legal ceiling for campaign expenditures. According to domestic observer groups, this loop-hole has been widely used by candidates to influence voters’ choices, particularly due to the high spending limits set for candidates¹⁹ and the absence of an effective mechanism for the SCE to verify the actual compliance of candidates’ campaign expenditures with the legal provision. The law also allows candidates and parties to provide voters with transportation to their polling station, which is a technique commonly used in Lebanon to influence their choice. The rapidly rising prices of fuel has made more voters dependent on the availability of free or cheap transportation to be able to cast their vote in their ancestral village. During the second week of May, many candidates openly offered to cover these costs for voters, including through the distribution of fuel vouchers²⁰. According to most candidates and even by some political parties, during the pre-election period candidates secured a significant number of votes by hiring multiple party delegates to cover polling stations and centers. Although this is not against the law either, civil society organizations (CSOs), citizen observers, political interlocutors and analysts assess this practice as a way of buying votes.

Candidates, citizen observer groups and NDI’s delegation noticed cases of abuse of state resources in the South, in Beirut, and in the Bekaa, including the incumbent parties’ exclusive use of municipal equipment

18 Article 62.2 stipulates that these donations are authorized within the campaign spending limit.

19 For the 2022 elections, the spending limits increased five times as compared to 2018 to compensate for the devaluation of the Lebanese pound. Candidates were legally allowed to spend a fixed lump sum of 750,000,000 LBP and a variable sum determined by the number of voters registered in the major district, amounting to 50,000 LBP per voter. Electoral lists were legally allowed to spend a fixed lump sum of 750,000,000 LBP.

20 In the week prior to the elections, Hezbollah launched a public campaign on Facebook granting fuel vouchers to voters usable on Election Day to encourage a high turnout.



for banners²¹ and public premises for campaign events. This provided an undue advantage to the affiliated candidates and was in clear violation of the law²². The SCE, given their limited resources, were unable to track campaign violations and issue sanctions, which contributed to a perception of impunity by the citizens.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

In terms of campaign finance regulations, the law sets a ceiling for candidates' expenditures, but the SCE can only check the spending in one bank account, which in practice leaves venues to circumvent the limit. This and other provisions meant to control compliance with the spending limit, such as the obligation to pay transactions by check, have been rendered inoperative in the context of the dramatic devaluation of the Lebanese pound and the collapse of the banking system. The generalized and almost exclusive use of cash makes it impossible to track transactions and financial operations. In these conditions there is no applicable and verifiable limit of campaign expenditures for candidates; tracking cash payments was impossible and determining the amount actually spent became illusory due to the hyperinflation²³. Moreover, several candidates shared that the price lists of advertisements communicated to the SCE by broadcasters did not reflect the amounts actually paid, essentially making this practice irrelevant. Television channels often failed to comply with their obligation to post a disclaimer for sponsored programs, making it even more difficult to check the real scale of paid-for content for each candidate.

CIVIC AND VOTER EDUCATION

The 2017 electoral law attributes²⁴ voter education and electoral awareness responsibilities to the SCE, while the MoIM is the main body responsible for voter information.

In December 2021, the MoIM, with the support of UNDP, launched a media campaign to remind Lebanese citizens to check their voter registration data ahead of the 2022 elections. For these elections, gender and age disaggregated data on candidates, lists, and registered voters were available. At the end of April, the MoIM produced and launched a video to encourage voter participation, mentioning the date of elections, the time polling stations are open, and how to vote. Billboards encouraging people to "Participate for Lebanon" were placed on the main highways across the country. The MoIM also produced and uploaded to its website²⁵ videos explaining the role and functions of the SCE, regarding media, advertising, and campaign finance, as well as spots motivating candidates to run and explaining registration steps. The SCE periodically posted videos and posters containing voter education material on its Facebook page. The voter education effort of the MoIM and the SCE was deemed insufficient by most NDI interlocutors, who pointed out the lack of awareness on voting procedures in large sectors of the electorate. Most political parties and candidates found it necessary to explain in their campaign how to mark the ballot paper for the list and the preferential

21 Street lamps on highways are commonly used to hang party banners in various districts.

22 According to Article 77, public facilities "shall not be used..." for campaigning.

23 Hyperinflation during the period could enable candidates to claim they spent at the pegged rate of 1,500 LBP per 1 USD, even though during elections the market rate was approximately 30,000 LBP per 1 USD.

24 Article 19, part 10: "Promoting electoral knowledge, guiding voters and encouraging democratic practice by all means available."

25 <https://bit.ly/3QEX3p>

vote. Commercial television channels produced their own content and aired civil society organizations' voter education content. With the support of NDI, youth associations carried out Get Out the Vote (GOTV) programs in the South and in the North to train first time and young voters on voting procedures, the electoral system, and the role of members of parliament.

As for political information in the months prior to elections, several CSOs and political activities created websites and apps to inform voters – especially those registered abroad – about the candidates' positions on society, political, and economic issues. Most of these voters' guides focused on emerging groups and candidates, as many of them were newcomers in politics and completely unknown to the public. However, the electoral system of Lebanon is primarily confessional (religious)-oriented. The ballot paper mentions the name of the list, the name and picture of each candidate and the confessional seat they are competing for, but there is no mention of the political affiliation of the candidates, which makes it difficult for the voter to make a fully informed choice²⁶.

MEDIA

Lebanon has one of the most diverse and pluralist media landscapes in the region; it ranks 107 out of 180 countries in Reporters Without Borders (RSF's) 2021 World Press Freedom Index, one of the best rankings in the Middle East. Most private media outlets in both traditional and online formats are aligned with a particular party or business interest, and to some extent reflect political and sectarian divides. NDI's April 2022 public opinion poll shows that the first sources of news used by citizens are television, family and friends, followed by social media networks and messaging apps²⁷.

According to political stakeholders, CSOs specialized in media,²⁸ and the SCE, candidates did not have equal access to the media. Private television networks favored wealthier candidates who could afford to pay high prices for airtime and the free airtime available on the public network Télé Liban was scarcely used by candidates because of its limited audience. Candidates paid for most private media coverage of the election period. The exorbitant advertisement prices applied by most television stations for the coverage of candidates' appearances– including talk shows and interviews– drastically limited the access to media for candidates with less funds. This essentially excluded civil society list candidates and most female candidates.

The Maharat Foundation's assessment of the coverage of candidates and lists during the pre-election period on the main seven television channels in Lebanon²⁹ noted an absence of equal opportunities, with wealthier candidates from established parties enjoying the vast share of overall election airtime (78 percent in March). In contrast, emerging groups candidates appeared on only 22 percent of these programs, although they were the majority (56 percent) of the candidates. This disproportionate coverage of candidates in the media reflected their unequal funding: interviewed candidates (especially women) from the emerging lists appeared

26 The name of the list that appears on the ballot does not indicate which political parties, movements or independent candidates the coalition includes. The name of the list often does not describe a political option.

27 59.4% and 54.8% of the respondents rely on Facebook and Whatsapp groups for their information. These two sources are trusted by 59.4% and 61.5% of their users.

28 Maharat Foundation and Skeyes Center for Media and Cultural Freedom

29 The main television channels, which are privately owned (Al Jadeed, LBCI, MTV, Al Manar, OTV, and NBN) and the public broadcaster Télé Liban.



on television for free only due to their personal connections or due to the support of advocacy organizations linked to the diaspora³⁰. Women's overall visibility in the media remained very limited, as they received 9 percent of the total coverage of candidates³¹. However, for the first time, one prime time television show called "50/50" hosted women candidates and covered their campaigns.

The SCE acts as oversight for much of the election process, including media appearances. They monitor candidates' paid appearances to ensure their appearances abide by the law and that equal media visibility and fair, balanced, and impartial treatment are provided to all candidates and lists in all forms of media. To this end, when there is a violation, the SCE may issue warnings and statements, make requests to the media, review complaints, and refer complaints to the Court of Publication, which has the right to impose fines, suspend work of an outlet in question temporarily, or, if the violation persists, suspend the outlet indefinitely. Although the SCE noted and recorded violations, the assessments and decisions regarding these violations and the complaints reviewed and referred to the court have not been published during the campaign period. As the SCE has no power to sanction violations during the campaign, candidates and the media were left without a timely remedy to media-related violations, and equitable visibility of candidates in the media was not ensured in practice. SCE released statements, decisions, and warnings, but some statements were not systematically uploaded on the website in a timely manner, depriving candidates and the media of relevant information about rules regarding media and social media coverage of the election process and the campaign.

30 Kulluna Irada's and Nahwa Al Watan organized the support to independent civil society lists from the diaspora.

31 According to Maharat Foundation's media monitoring of the public broadcaster and six main private television channels in February and March 2022.

The SCE carried out social media monitoring for the 2022 parliamentary elections with a team of 30 monitors trained by the UNDP. The SCE noted that defamation and inflammatory speech had increased in the days prior to the election.

During the campaign period, the SCE published two statements stating that the Maharat Foundation was “participating in accompanying and supervising the elections illegally” and should be accredited in order to conduct any monitoring. Following the warning, Maharat Foundation refrained from publishing their monthly media monitoring report until after the conclusion of the election process. This new interpretation of the law by the SCE³² equates monitoring of the media coverage of the electoral process and the candidates’ campaigns with election observation by citizen observer organizations. This creates a precedent to restrict monitoring, analysis, assessment and research activities by CSOs during the election cycle.

WOMEN’S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

With only six women elected in 2018 (4.7 percent of the MPs), Lebanon has been among the countries with the lowest number of women in parliament in the world and in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region³³. Despite ever-increasing demands from women’s organizations and civil society groups, the 2017 electoral law did not include temporary special measures to foster women’s representation and several gender quota bills proposed in the past legislature were shelved due to the resistance of political parties. In addition to a hostile political environment and cultural and financial barriers, women face legal obstacles to their political participation³⁴. Based on the personal status legislation, a woman’s voter registration is automatically transferred to her husband upon marriage, which restricts her voting rights.

With 118 women out of 718 candidates (16.4 percent) present on 65 of the 103 registered lists, this election period confirmed women’s increasing interest in running for parliament and a shift in attitudes toward their role in politics. In 2009 and 2018, 12 and 86 women ran, respectively. Civil society lists nominated 52 women, some due to a voluntary gender quota. Sixty women ran as independents, among whom 18 joined party-led lists. Altogether political parties fielded only seven women, and, as in all past elections, Hezbollah nominated only male candidates. In Beirut II, nine lists included a total of 24 women in one constituency. In South III, no women ran on the three competing lists.

Three women candidates were publicly disavowed by their relatives and cast as “traitors” to the values and political orientation of the family, and many others were pressured to renounce their candidacy. During the

32 The SCE based their warnings to the Maharat Foundation on article 20 of Law 44. In the 2022 elections, the Maharat Foundation monitored the media during the election period according to the same methodology as in 2018. However, the SCE did not issue any warnings in 2018 and did not require any accreditation from the organization to carry out their media monitoring.

33 With 4.7% women MPs in 2021, Lebanon was 180 out of 187 countries in the Inter-Parliamentary Union’s index, and lagged behind the 18.3 % average percentage of female parliamentary representation in the MENA region.

34 High candidate registration fees and campaign costs put them at a disadvantage given the gender salary gap and their lower access to resources owing to the inheritance system and patriarchal traits of the Lebanese society. Lebanon ratified the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), albeit with reservations related to restrictions on the transmission of Lebanese nationality from women to their children and marriage rights – all legal provisions that discriminate against women.

campaign, most women faced insults, smear campaigns, intimidation, and threats³⁵. Maharat Foundation's monitoring of gender and elections detected that women candidates faced derogatory or sexualized comments, and patronizing treatment in the media, as well as psychological and sexual violence on social networks, mainly through cyber-bullying³⁶.

PARTICIPATION of PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Lebanon signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2007 and finally ratified it in March 2022 – which constitutes a major step towards actual progress in the field of political participation of PWDs in elections, as the national legislation was not adequately addressing these rights³⁷. The 2017 election law states that people with special needs may request assistance from a voter of their choice to mark the ballot and cast their vote under the supervision of a polling station officer. Although activists have long advocated for independent voting, including through the introduction of braille ballots for the visually impaired, these provisions were not implemented in the 2022 elections. This is partially due to the short planning period, as well as the lack of commitment and coordination by the government and respective ministries. On the more positive side, for the first time in a Lebanese election, persons with hearing impairments were able to access voter information in sign language³⁸. Several lists of the new emerging groups and the Kataeb party included PWD rights in their platforms or messages.

According to LUPD, for these parliamentary elections, the MoIM announced their willingness to take practical steps to facilitate the voting process on the ground floor³⁹. In reality, on Election Day, few PWD voters were able to vote in the tents set up on the ground floor because their assigned polling stations were not changed to the ground floor. Based on data shared by the MoSA with the MoIM, only 1000 polling stations out of approximately 7000 were opened on the ground floor. Only a sample of voters with mobility impairment were assigned to these ground floor accessible polling stations. Therefore, the vast majority of the polling stations did not facilitate independent and dignified access for PWDs and elderly citizens.

35 All the women candidates NDI met with, across the districts, regardless of their political affiliation, reported receiving such comments on their social media. Four of them who ran on civil society lists in Beirut, in Mount Lebanon, and in the South reported threats urging them to withdraw.

36 More than a thousand sexist derogatory comments and insults were identified on Twitter and Facebook on the 23 accounts of female aspirants and 102 accounts of women candidates monitored in February, March and April.

37 Preceding the signature of the CRPD, the *Law on the Rights of Disabled Persons*, adopted in 2000, recognized the rights of PWDs and foresaw their integration into social and economic life through employment, transport and housing quotas, and guarantees in terms of health and education services. However, their right to political participation is supported by the establishment of the National Council for Disability Affairs that includes members elected by and from PWDs and disabled persons organizations (DPOs).

38 The MoIM produced, with the help of UNDP, several posts dubbed in sign language that the SCE circulated on its Facebook page. LUPD and the Union of Deaf People produced voter education materials in sign language that were circulated online through their networks.

39 In February, the MoIM issued a circular encouraging the governorates and municipalities to establish polling centers in buildings where they could be established on the ground floor, and organized a systematic collection of data on accessibility. LUPD assessed the accessibility of 350 polling centers and shared this information with the MoIM, requesting to change the location of inaccessible polling stations in 145 centers.



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ELECTION DAY

NDI's International Election Study Mission witnessed voting in 12 districts of Lebanon, including the opening and setting up at 12 polling stations, the voting procedures at 136 polling stations and the closing and counting at 12 polling stations. Throughout the areas observed, polling center perimeters were secured by the Lebanese Armed Forces and internal areas regulated by the Internal Security forces (ISF). Both the Army and ISF were present and performed their duties professionally - keeping order and helping and supporting voters.

NDI supported LUPD's observation and deployment of 232 observers including 100 PWDs on Election Day. LUPD assessed the accessibility of polling stations for PWDs and the elderly and determined that the majority of polling centers were not accessible. Furthermore, LUPD noted that the performance of polling staff and the behavior of candidate and list delegates was deemed inadequate and at times abusive, undermining the free exercise by PWDs and elderly citizens of their voting rights.

GENERAL ENVIRONMENT

The general environment in all polling centers and polling stations visited by the delegation was calm and orderly. In most cases, the voters had the ability to exercise their voting rights freely within a generally peaceful



environment. However, the strong, even overwhelming presence of party agents and active campaigns inside and outside of the polling centers was noticed across the country. In some areas this led to overcrowding and indirect pressure on the voters. Some party agents were seen trying to influence voters and, in at least one case, accompany them to a place where they could meet with the candidate.

The main sectarian parties still dominated Election Day spending with a heavy presence of tents, buses, food for election workers and candidate agents. In some areas, they also offered snacks and water to the voters. In Zahrany-Tyre, Hezbollah and Amal supporters were campaigning and showing the voters how to vote for their list and candidate on a laminated ballot paper before entering the polling center. In Bcharre, Lebanese Forces had a rally and gathered right outside the polling center.

At polling stations party agents often wore T-shirts, vests, caps and other materials with candidates faces and party logos on them. The polling staff loudly announced the name of each voter and the party agents tracked the voters with their own lists. In some areas, candidates visited polling centers and spent considerable time there. These practices did not violate any Lebanese laws; however, these actions could have interfered with the voters' free choice.

Overall, observers could monitor the process without any restrictions. However, according to NDI's long-standing partner domestic election monitoring organization LADE, during the vote sorting process, several observers were denied entry by the security forces, in violation of law, before everyone was authorized to attend the sorting process. The Lebanese Armed Forces expelled an EU observer team in Rashaya and only allowed the team back in when the counting process had finished.

Domestic observers reported cases in which observers themselves were targets of intimidation and violence. According to LADE, over 35 of their observers were threatened and harassed by Hezbollah and Amal supporters in Saida, Baalbek and Tyre and three observers -all of them women- were assaulted or beaten by candidate agents in the South, the Chouf and the Bekaa regions - this election was the first in which their observers faced physical attacks. Domestic observers also reportedly faced intimidation by representatives of the Lebanese Forces, Lebanese Democratic Party, and Progressive Socialist Party in Baadaran, Chouf, Aley, Mansourieh, and Rmeileh.

ELECTION DAY PROCEDURES

At the majority of polling stations observed, there were only two polling staff present, which appeared insufficient. The party agents' presence was observed at all polling stations during the Election Day. At some polling stations, the number of candidate agents was disproportionate and one party or coalition had more than six representatives per polling station.

Voter lists were not always accurate. Some of the voters who had checked their registrations during the pre-election campaign were not on the lists on Election Day. Some women voters who had experienced marriage or divorce found themselves removed from the lists in the areas they used to vote in without being informed of the change.

Almost all polling stations had the necessary materials. At several polling stations, the ballot box seals and stamps were missing. At some polling stations ballot boxes were not sealed according to the instructions provided. When asked, some polling staff claimed not having sufficient seals, but the contrary was observed.

The lack of uniformity in procedures and rules reported by the majority of the teams led to delays and confusion in some polling stations and an opening for party delegates to intervene. During the voting this sometimes resulted in party delegates interfering with the voter's privacy.

Secrecy of vote was generally respected however there were cases when elderly voters needed assistance and support was given by party agents. There were instances when party agents at the polling station would ask voters for whom they voted or would indicate to vote for their respective party.

The counting observed across the country showed that, with a few exceptions, polling staff did not fully master the procedure of filling the result sheets and often did not know the criteria for determining the validity and invalidity of the ballots. In some instances, the process was deemed chaotic mainly because the staff were too few to manage all the counting tasks swiftly. Some party agents unduly interfered, resulting in some votes being incorrectly canceled. In a few cases they contributed positively with a sounder knowledge of the regulations than the polling staff. Although the determination of the validity and invalidity of the ballots followed different criteria in the polling stations observed, an agreement was almost always reached on these votes and on the results of the candidates and lists between the polling staff and party agents.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Despite the efforts made by the international community and domestic watchdog organizations to lobby for and promote the rights of PWDs, almost none of the polling centers were suitable for the independent and dignified access due to their location on the upper floors of buildings. The vast majority of the elevators were not operational. Ballot boxes were not placed on the ground for the easy accessibility of voters in wheelchairs and ballot booths were not adapted for them. Voters with reduced mobility and some elderly were carried up and down on the stairs mainly by party agents and not by the polling staff or the ISF.

THE OCV VOTING AND COUNTING

The out-of-country voting (OCV) took place a week before the elections, on May 6 and 8, in 59 countries all over the world, under the supervision and organization of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA). 225,277 Lebanese living abroad registered and 142,041 voted, reaching a voter turnout of 63.05%.

Once the voting process was finalized in these countries, the ballot boxes were secured, equipped with GPS tracking devices, and sent through a private company back to Lebanon and securely stored in the Central Bank under the supervision of the MoIM until May 15.

Several political stakeholders, domestic observers, and the SCE were not fully aware of the procedures for counting and aggregating the out-of-country votes with the votes made in Lebanon as the MoIM did not

provide this information before Election Day. Members of NDI's delegation observed the OCV counting process in one Lower Registration Committee (LRC) in Saida (South I district). Lower and Higher Registration Committees are temporary bodies headed by judges that are in charge of the tabulation of the results and carry out the counting process of the OCV. Following the closing of polling stations at 7pm on May 15, the OCV ballots were sent from the central bank, where they had been kept for safekeeping, to the Beirut Justice Palace. There the OCV ballots from all the countries were sorted by voting district, and then dispatched in envelopes to the 15 districts of Lebanon (the OCV ballots for Beirut I and II districts remained in Beirut).

In Saida, upon arrival at the district, the LRCs accepted and registered the envelopes with OCV ballots, along with the domestic votes brought in by the heads of each polling station. The results of all the polling stations of the district were then entered in the computer system - a smooth operation when the counting was accurate and without issues but slowed when polling station results sheets included mistakes or inconsistencies, as many of them required a full recalculation.⁴⁰ Errors included mislabeling of invalid votes and blank votes, wrong tallies, and arithmetical mistakes.⁴¹ Once all in-country polling station results were entered into the system around 3am, after being assigned a batch of OCV ballots by the head judge of the Higher Registration Committee, the judges of the LRC proceeded to count the votes in front of cameras and screen systems. This allowed observers and candidate/list agents to watch the scrutiny and determination of each ballot paper, before calculating the results and entering them in the computer system.⁴² The OCV counting lasted until the following day in Saida, as was the case in several other districts,⁴³ which led to the announcement of the preliminary results by the MoIM on May 17.

The MoIM did not issue any detailed guidelines to the LRCs and HRCs judges in charge of the vote tabulation and the OCV counting. According to LADE, EU observers, and NDI's observation of these processes in the LRC of Saida and Beirut, inconsistencies were noted among the judges' decisions, especially regarding the validity of the ballots.

VOTER TURNOUT

Despite earlier announcements that the general turnout of 2022 was lower than 2018 (40.38 percent compared to 49.68 percent), the final numbers published by the MoIM showed that the overall turnout, reached 49.19 percent, decreasing only by 0.48 percent compared to the previous elections although with different trends across Lebanon.⁴⁴ The most significant development was linked to the participation abroad, rising from 46,799 in 2018 to 142,041 voters in 2022 and representing 7.27 percent of the electorate.⁴⁵

40 In Saida's LRC, almost 50% of polling station results needed a full recount.

41 A frequent error that led the judges to carry out manual recounts of the ballots of a polling station was due to an inconsistency between the totals in the results sheet - the number of votes received for each list and candidate did not equal the votes cast minus invalid and blank votes.

42 The OCV counting process was lengthy, as each judge in the LRC would open each large envelope containing the votes from a polling station from a specific country, read aloud how many ballots it included, and then proceed to examine each ballot, placing it under the camera.

43 In Saida, the OCV votes numbered 5,356 for the major district of South 1. In Beirut 2, more than 16,000 OCV votes were counted.

44 Beirut 1 and Mount Lebanon 3 saw the higher increases compared to 2018, with 2.65% and 2.54%, while South 1, North 2, and Bekaa 3 had the most significant drops in turnout, with respectively -5.93%, -3.16%, and -3.10%.

45 Voters abroad represented 2.57% of the total number who had cast their vote in 2018. Out of 82,965 registered voters, 46,799 turned out in 2018 (56.41%).



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CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

GENERAL

- The election law should be amended before the next election period to ensure legal certainty, remove existing gaps, ambiguities and inconsistencies, and follow international norms and good practice. All state institutions responsible for the conduct, management and supervision of the elections should guarantee that the law is implemented consistently throughout the country during the electoral cycle at all levels of the election administration (polling centers and polling stations, registration committees, MoIM, MoFA, and SCE).
- The relevant state institutions should announce Election Day well ahead of the elections taking place to ensure timely preparations, and should ensure that sufficient and adequate financial, technical, and human resources are committed and effectively delivered to guarantee the elections will happen.
- The Election Management Body responsible for the conduct and organization of the elections should be a permanent and independent institution, free from any political affiliations. Should the current system remain, the SCE should be granted full financial and administrative autonomy from the MoIM, sufficient funds and human resources on time, and executive and enforcement prerogatives in line with its missions of monitoring the compliance of media, candidates and lists with campaign and campaign finance regulations.
- All government ministries and state institutions involved in managing, supervising and supporting the elections (MOIM, MoFA, SCE, MoE, and MoSA) should coordinate their work with each other, make this coordination a priority during the election period, and concentrate their joint efforts to ensure the process is credible, transparent, and inclusive.
- The voting age should be reduced to 18 years to encourage the participation of younger citizens in elections and give them the right to express their will and choose their representatives.
- Temporary special measures to increase women's political participation, such as mandatory quotas on candidate lists and/or reserved seats should be introduced in the election law to guarantee women's representation in parliament and in local assemblies.

PRE-ELECTION

- A timely candidate registration process should be guaranteed by the election administration and the institutions involved from the day of the call for the elections.
- The MoIM and MoFA, as well as the subdivisions of the election administration at all levels, should be allocated sufficient budgets and disbursed funds well ahead of the elections to ensure that preparations are taking place as planned.
- The MoIM and MoFA, as well as the SCE and the ministries and administrations supporting or taking part in the conduct of the election process (MoSA, MoE, Ministry of Justice (MoJ)) should ensure the transparent and systemic dissemination of comprehensive and accurate information without delay on all the circulars, regulations, decrees, decisions, statements and announcements they issue in relation to the election process, through official channels that are accessible and reach all the election stakeholders free of charge, in line with and effectively enforcing the Laws on access to information.
- Voter education should take place early on in the election process and at a larger scale. It should include targeted efforts towards different groups such as the diaspora, first time voters, elderly, women, and PWDs.
- The campaign finance institutional and legal framework should be amended in order to ensure a stricter and efficient control on expenditures and funds used in the campaign, and to provide for a level playing field for the candidates. Regulations should include the timely and comprehensive



provision of relevant information to the public throughout the election period and without delay after the Election Day on regulations, financial reports of the candidates, media advertisement prices, violations of the regulations and decisions of the SCE.

- The MoIM and relevant state institutions (law enforcement bodies and the judiciary) should address effectively, without delay, any instances of violence, pressure and intimidation on candidates, activists, voters, observers, election workers and other stakeholders, during the election period in order to protect the victims, investigate the cases appropriately and sanction without delay the perpetrators so as to strengthen the rule of law and end with the culture of impunity. Incidents of violence against women in elections should be given particular attention.
- The relevant authorities (civil register, Mukhtars⁴⁶, MoIM) should inform women well in advance of the Election Day on the transfer of their place of voter registration linked to the changes of their marital status.
- Mega centers, which allow voters to vote closer to their place of residence, should be implemented well in advance of the next parliamentary election cycle. Voters should nevertheless be given the choice to be registered and vote either at their place of birth/ancestral village, or at their place of residence. Upon marriage, women should be given the choice between voting at their pre-marital place of registration or at their spouses' voter registration.

46 Mukhtars are local representatives elected at the level of the village or the neighborhood, in charge of administrative acts such as issuing certificates of residence for the citizens.



- Domestic and international observers should be allowed to have access to all levels of election administration at any stage of the process (during pre-election, Election Day including the opening, the voting, the counting and the tabulation, and post-election period). Access denied to observers to any stage of the process should be categorized as a serious violation of the law and addressed timely and accordingly by the relevant election administration body.
- Domestic election observers should be allowed to file complaints on violations of the election law and procedures at any level of electoral processes to any level of election administration.
- Public broadcaster Télé Liban should expand access to all candidates to appear on the station, debate, and hold discussions in order to help citizens to make an informed choice.

ELECTION DAY

- The MoIM should develop clear instructions on the validity and invalidity of ballot papers. Voters should be adequately informed and the polling staff should be trained on this.
- Comprehensive training should be conducted for the polling staff members on Election Day procedures ahead of Election Day.
- Due to the complexity of the electoral system and the difficulty to understand the components of the coalition-based lists, the ballot paper should indicate the political affiliation of each candidate to allow voters to make a fully informed choice of their representative to the parliament.
- The number of polling staff members should be increased to avoid the involvement of the Army and ISF in the electoral process, such as in managing the flow of incoming voters.
- The MoIM, MoE and MoSA should ensure that PWDs exercise their constitutional right to vote independently with dignity. The measures to be adopted include ensuring access to polling centers, setting polling stations on the ground floor for people with physical disabilities, provision of ballot papers in braille script, and adapted ballot booths.
- All campaigning should be prohibited on Election Day, in the media, on social media and offline. Campaigning materials, including vests, T-shirts, lunch boxes and all materials with colors or logos of political parties or candidates, should be forbidden in polling stations and polling centers.
- The amendments of the election law should take into consideration limiting the number of agents from candidates/parties/coalitions and avoid overcrowding and overrepresentation of some political parties/coalitions in the same polling station.
- Given the history of intimidation, pressure and vote buying on voters in some environments, the name and surname, the date of birth or any other personal data of the voter should not be announced out loud during the voting process in the polling station.

- Copies of the polling station reports signed and stamped by the polling staff should be handed to the all observer groups, as well as party agents who request it. These copies should be considered a document with equal weight than the original reports for any complaint and appeal purpose.

POST ELECTION

- Clear procedures and instructions for the counting of OCV and tabulation processes should be developed and made public well ahead of the Election Day by the MoIM.

ELECTION RESULTS

Political Party	Number of seats
Ahbash (Al-Masharii)	2
Al Jamaa Al Islamiya	1
Amal Movement	15
Free Patriotic Movement	17
Hezbollah	15
Independence Movement	1
Independent	12
Independent with Political Affiliation	16
Independent, Change, Civil society movements	13
Kataeb	4
Lebanese Forces	15
Marada Movement	1
National Dialogue Party	1
National Liberal Party	1
Popular Nasserist Organization	1
Progressive Socialist Party	9
Tashnag Party	3
Union Party	1



- Legend:**
- Free Patriotic Movement
 - Hezbollah
 - Amal Movement
 - Independent
 - Independent with party affiliation
 - Independent, Change Movement
 - Lebanese Forces
 - Progressive Socialist Party
 - Kataeb
 - Tashnaq Party
 - Albasha
 - National Liberal Party
 - Independence Movement
 - Union Party
 - Popular Nasserist Organization
 - National Dialogue Party
 - Marda Movement

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

The Constitutional Council is the primary body tasked with the adjudication of post-election complaints. It is only limited to hear the complaints on a case-by-case basis submitted by candidates. A candidate has up to 30 days after the announcement of the results of the elections to submit a complaint to the Constitutional Council together with all documents and evidence supporting the complaint. A challenged candidate has 15 days to submit a response. The investigation and complaint adjudication process may take six months from the official announcement of the election results until a decision is announced.

After the announcement of the official election results, a number of stakeholders expressed concerns that the count and tabulation process could have been manipulated and several candidates announced their intention to file complaints to the Constitutional Council. However, they lacked the trust in the process of dispute resolution, claiming that even with having the strong evidence the Council with high probability will not satisfy their complaint to avoid the repeated elections.

On Election Day over 3000 violations were reported by local observers. According to LADE, the MoIM, did not prevent assaults against observers and candidates. The MoIM rejected LADE's official letter describing in detail the violations with an excuse that Sunday, May 15 is a non-working day. LADE observers refused to file complaints related to their intimidation to their respective police instances due to the fear and lack of trust.

The Constitutional Council's deadline for accepting appeals against the results of the parliamentary elections ended on Thursday, June 16, 2022. Fifteen appeals were registered in 10 districts. The appeals were filed between May 31 and June 16. The majority of the appeals were related to surpassing the legal electoral spending cap, as well as bribery, unequal opportunities, and sectarian incitement.

The district of Tripoli topped the list with four appeals, while the districts of Keserwen-Jbeil and Saida Jezzine came in second place with two appeals each.

Below are the details of the 15 appeals as reported:

- P.A vs. MP E.K (Maronite seat in Tripoli)
- M.H vs. MP B.A (Sunni seat in Zahle)
- J.Z vs. MP. F.K (Maronite seat in Keserwan)
- H.Z vs. MP A.R (Alawite seat in Akkar)
- E.C vs. MP C.Z (minorities seat in Beirut I)
- Ex-MP F. K (Sunni seat in Tripoli) vs. MPs R.F, E. M and F.S
- A.A vs. MP S.A (Maronite seat in Jezzine)
- M.K and the Hope and Loyalty list vs. MP F. H (Druze seat in Hasbaya)
- Ex-MP I.A vs. MPs C.M and S.A (Maronite seat in Jezzine)

- Z.M vs. MPs F.S and W.S (Druze seat in Beirut II)
- J.V vs. MPs R.H and H.P (Maronite seat in Northern Metn)⁴⁷
- H.N vs. MPs E.M and F. S (Alawite seat in Tripoli)
- S.S vs. MPs N.F and F. K (Maronite seat in Keserwan)
- T.M vs. MP J.A (Greek Orthodox seat in Tripoli)
- W.H vs. MP F.A (Shiite seat in Baabda)

The constitutional council has three months to decide on the appeals. In the event of an MP's position being revoked, the parliament would either announce the new MP according to the calculations based on the elections law, or impose the re-election of a new MP in the vacant seat.

NDI will continue observing the complaint adjudication process at the Constitutional Council and will additionally inform the public on its development.

⁴⁷ The appeal of J.G. was one of the more notable among submitted. J.G. had filed a complaint with the Shura Council after the MoIM denied him access to reports on the detailed election results for every ballot box in the Mount Lebanon II district, the voter list for the district, all of the votes that were canceled in all the ballot boxes of the district, and the results of each ballot box in the district, including the expat voting. "We asked for these results to see where the discrepancies are between the results of each town and the final results," J.G. said. "Unfortunately, handing over this [Interior Ministry] information right now wouldn't give us the time needed to integrate the information into our complaint," J.G. said, explaining he intended to integrate this material during the 30 day appeal process. J.G.'s list was 88 votes short of winning a seat in Mount Lebanon II, while J.G. garnered more preferential votes than many of the winning candidates.

