



IFES Quarterly Report: April 1, 2005- June 30, 2005

Lebanon Election Mapping

USAID Cooperative Agreement No. DGC-A-00-01-0000400-00

Project Period: April 7, 2005 – August 15, 2005

Total Budget: \$430,000.00 Expenses Recorded to Date: \$187,552

Results Summary/Impact Statement

During the period covered by this report, in summary IFES:

- Provided periodic reports to USAID on developments in Lebanon on the electoral law and on electoral preparations more generally;
- Put in place analytical components describing a strategic electoral assistance program for Lebanon;
- deployed technical specialists in the areas of electoral administration, voter education, media monitoring and observation liaison; and
- Developed, produced and disseminated voter education “response messages” prior to the Election Day.

Background

From early April 2005 to late May 2005 IFES conducted an electoral “mapping” mission in Lebanon to enable IFES to develop an effective follow-on electoral assistance strategy. IFES deployed a 5 member team of elections and regional experts in election law, management and administration, security, representation systems design, voter education, communications and outreach, delimitation of constituency boundaries, Lebanese history, and socio-political development, who conducted an assessment and provided detailed analysis of the current political situation in Lebanon.

The team met with a range of social and political stakeholders including representatives from political parties, civil society, faith-based organizations, the government, media and other elements in Lebanese society. Elections were held on May 29, June 5, June 12, and June 19, 2005.

Since late-May 2005, IFES has been engaged in providing electoral technical assistance to the Lebanese government in the following areas identified by the Lebanese government: observation liaison and media monitoring. IFES has also engaged in addressing challenges and developing projects in the area of political finance, voter education and electoral administration.

Activities

IFES activities are fully detailed in a series of five reports which have been included as annexes.

Activities Planned for Next Quarter

- Continue to provide technical electoral assistance to the Lebanese government in the areas as identified by the government;
- Develop and conceptualize a long-term electoral assistance program; and
- Continue to develop a program for Lebanon to address challenges in the area of political finance which promote transparency and accountability.

Attachments:

ANNEX A: Lebanon Mapping Mission, First Interim Report, April 25, 2005

ANNEX B: Lebanon Mapping Mission, Second Interim Report, May 15, 2005

ANNEX C: Lebanon Mapping Mission, Third Interim Report, May 26, 2005

ANNEX D: Lebanon Mapping Mission, Final Report, June 30, 2005

ANNEX E: Lebanon Mapping Mission – Electoral Assistance Follow on Project, First Interim Report, June 30, 2005



CENTER FOR TRANSITIONAL and POST-CONFLICT GOVERNANCE

LEBANON MAPPING MISSION Team Report

INTERIM UPDATE Beirut, April 25, 2005

Under the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS) agreement number DGC-A-00-01-0000400-00, award for "Lebanon Election Mapping", IFES is providing the first of three progress updates. The second such update will be provided on or about May 11, 2005. These updates will be used to create the electoral map of Lebanon as described in the project proposal.

At the time of this report, the IFES team is comprised of the following members, all of whom contributed to this update:

- A Political Competition and Oversight Expert (arrived on April 9);
- A Field Operations Specialist (arrived on April 9);
- A Participation, Inclusion, and Security Expert, (arrived on April 13); and
- A Legal Framework Expert (arrived on April 18).

Two additional team members will arrive shortly and will contribute to future updates:

- An Election Administration and Security Expert, (scheduled to arrive on April 29); and
- A Delimitation Expert (scheduled to arrive on May 6).

This initial update focuses on gaining a fuller understanding of the political situation and general environment in view of the electoral process during a time of great fluidity and change. In addition, it presents very preliminary findings on the election structure and election administration.

This report should be considered preliminary and thus the information presented will be subject to significant modification or elimination from the final report.

1. GENERAL OVERVIEW

Overshadowing all other events were the recent establishment of a new government and the Prime Minister's stated commitment to hold elections by the May deadline. It is under this assumption that groups and blocs from the opposition continue to negotiate and form new alliances, not only for electoral purposes but to prepare for the discussion surrounding potential amendments to the electoral law – specifically those that will have an effect on the composition of the new parliament and government. A key element clarifying the general context of the electoral environment and process in Lebanon is the absence of a structured political party system. Instead, Lebanon's political forces operate in a fluid system of alliances and arrangements between individuals who derive power from a combination of factors that include their religious confession, family/social status and economic influence.

The assassination of former Prime Minister Hariri has resulted in patriotic sentiments of unity among Lebanese citizens and has contributed to the formation of a more cohesive opposition. This, accompanied by the withdrawal of the Syrian forces, has opened a public discussion and creates the opportunity to address several fundamental aspects of democratic institution building. These include a potential reform of the election system, the review of the system of representation, and issues concerning political parties and political financing laws. This current discourse, however, will not necessarily remain as keen once a new parliament and government are formed. This poses a serious challenge in forecasting the scope and nature of technical assistance which might be necessary. It also hinders the identification of viable opportunities for a potential program of support to promote transparency and equity in the political process.

2. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

To date, the amendment(s) to the electoral law of 2000 have not yet been approved by the parliament. However the new Prime Minister, Najib Miqati, has stated that should an amended law be approved prior to May 29, the election will be held under the newly amended law. Otherwise, elections will go forward on the basis of the existing law of 2000. Debate surrounding all amendments is expected to begin the week of April 25, making it increasingly possible to achieve the May 29 deadline.

A proposal to change the system of representation from the current majoritarian system to proportional representation has also been introduced in the public discussion. Proportional representation is openly supported by Amal, Hizbollah, the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM), and Lebanese Forces (LF) and less conspicuously by other blocs in the opposition. This discussion has also involved one of the key issues in the current debate: the question of district size. Although many parties seem flexible on discussing both issues, they -- in particular the "core" opposition groups - - are more concerned with holding the elections on time.

The fundamental political battle is being fought over the size and form of the districts. Since the end of the war, the districts have been redrawn prior to each election in order to facilitate a majority for pro-Syrian candidates. Indeed, this is the main argument for not reverting to the 2000 law. However, others feel that with the

Syrian influence losing strength, reverting to the districts delimited in 2000 would not have the same effect today, and would at least ensure holding elections on time.

Other options being discussed are:

- Division into electoral districts according to the large administrative districts (*muhafada*), favored by the loyalists and vehemently opposed by Qornet Shahwan. (The Taif Accord stipulates *muhafada* but "after the administrative divisions are revised"; or
- Take up an agreement made in early February on a draft law favoring smaller districts (*qada*), which was to have been voted on the day after Rafiq Hariri's death. This position is now being pushed by the Christian opposition. Maronite Patriarch Nasrallah Sfeir is the main supporter of the *qada*, and he may be able to convince the Hariri and Jumblatt blocs to support him. In the view of some observers, this issue has the potential to cause a fundamental split in the opposition ranks, since Jumblatt seems likely to opt out of the *qada*-based proposal. As an accommodation to the loyalists, Jumblatt recently suggested a law based on nine rather than seven *muhafada*, and on the majority system.

The gap between those who support a law based respectively on *qada* and *muhafada* may be impossible to bridge, leaving the 2000 law as the only compromise that would ensure that elections be held on time. It is not possible to determine at the moment whether, even if the 2000 law is used for the upcoming polls, momentum for fundamental changes to the election law is large enough to reappear after the elections.

The sectarian make up of parliament will not change regardless of the electoral law that is adopted since seats are assigned by sects¹. Nonetheless, this make up is not for discussion. The crucial issue is whether candidates from these sects will be truly representative of their sect. The basics are:

- Parliament is made up of 128 seats, where Christians and Muslims each have 64 seats; the 64 seats are then further divided among the various Christian and Muslim sects. Note this division in parliament remains the same even though Muslims now make up a majority of the population, estimated between 60-68 percent of the total population depending on the sources and variables used.
- The constitution stipulates that electoral districts be multi-sectarian in order to encourage various sects to form mixed lists and thereby create centrist/moderate political representatives. However, since the first post-war elections in 1992, the delineation of electoral districts has been manipulated in order to return overwhelming majorities to certain sects in specific electoral districts.
- This system, which was designed to create mixed lists of cross-sectarian candidates, has been manipulated to counterbalance and essentially eliminate

¹ Among Muslims, the 64 seats are divided as follows: Sunnis 27; Shiites 27; Druze 8; Alawi 2. Among Christians: Maronites 34; Greek Orthodox 14; Greek Catholics 8; Roman Catholics 2; Armenians 6.

the impact of that requirement. This was done in either of two ways: by expanding electoral districts (South and Beqaa) or by reducing them in size (for the Druze in parts of Mount Lebanon).

With Syrian military withdrawal complete, Syrian political influence is vastly reduced. The IFES team suspects it is not likely that the above described practices will endure on the same scale. However, the current electoral law debate will revolve around current perceptions regarding how changes in the delimitation of constituency boundaries and the system of representation will affect positively or negatively each political grouping.

The IFES team has begun a thorough review of the proposed amendments and will provide comments and analysis in the subsequent updates. NOTE: This will be something of a moving target until a final law is passed.

3. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION AND ELECTIONS SECURITY

A central concern regarding election administration in Lebanon is the absence of an independent electoral body to administer elections. Despite numerous recommendations regarding the need to establish an independent election management body (EMB) to take over these duties from the Ministry of Interior, with growing national and international pressure to have elections by May 29, these elections will once again be managed by the Ministry of the Interior.

Another significant element adding to the existing perception that election integrity may be compromised without an independent administrator is the presence and influence of various intelligence services on the elections process. There have been some positive developments on this front (one key agent is on "extended leave" from the intelligence services, another has resigned). In addition, increased scrutiny by party/candidates' agents, domestic and possibly international observers will also provide an environment encouraging more open and transparent administration of these elections. However, the conduct of the polls by the Interior Ministry is still a substantial concern.

Accordingly, the IFES team's analysis and recommendations with regard to the composition and establishment of a suitable EMB in Lebanon will accordingly focus on the long-term and on future opportunities for significant reform in the electoral system. In addition, the team will provide observations and recommendations on incremental improvements to the quality of election administration and security that we believe could (given the political will) be implemented for the upcoming elections.

3.1 Voter Register and Voters' List

The voters' register is a list extracted from the National Registry database and is generally perceived to be adequate and safe. From the National Registry database, the voters' list can be produced using the applicable fields which include:

- Voter name;
- Place of birth (Lebanese citizens vote where they are born regardless of residence);
- Father's name;
- Date of birth (therefore age); and

- Religious confession (this field has permitted analysis to effectively manipulate the delineation of electoral districts but is of great value to study fundamental issues of representation).

The integrity of this list remains in question due to the inclusion of an estimated 9 to 10 percent of "excess electors." This problem is due to the failure to purge from the list deceased voters and duplicates of women who have married since being registered. The team was also informed that an estimated 15 percent of those registered voters are military and persons residing overseas. The scope of "excess voters" was not confirmed by the team and the reasons are likely more numerous than currently reported. To date none of the sources interviewed by the IFES team has charged that "exclusion" from the voter register is a major problem.

In order to more carefully analyze this question, IFES will obtain an electronic copy of the national register which is reportedly available from the Ministry of Interior at low or no cost. Also, at least two, reportedly reliable databases of the voting population are available for purchase from individuals or firms. These databases for purchase are linked to GIS (geographic information system or mapping) software allowing for reports produced over a map (national, district, governorate, as one chooses, essentially). The IFES team is also looking into obtaining copies of these as well in advance of the arrival in Beirut of the team's delimitation/GIS expert. In addition, the IFES team will increase its scrutiny of the process of updating, maintaining and producing the voter registers which will be used for the upcoming polls.

3.2 Voters' Cards

The notion of forged cards being widely used to vote illegally is not presently seen as a major issue in election administration in Lebanon. However, from a technical perspective the security of the voter registration cards is indeed questionable as they are easily forged. Should the administration of the process become highly contentious, allegations regarding the security of the voter card and fears of "double voting" (using forged cards to cast more than one ballot) may raise as an issue.

The design and issuance of new, more secure voter cards after a future update of the electoral register is an option which would increase credibility of both the voters' cards and the election process itself. This, however, is a long-term question and not a viable option for the May 2005 elections.

A short term solution to the question of voter card security would be to select a credible (both in terms of public perception and in terms of real security) identity document(s), which could be required in addition to the voter card at the polls. In addition to providing a safeguard in terms of "double voting" such a measure would be an easy and cost effective means for the Ministry of Interior and the Lebanese government to send a clear signal that all possible measures are taken to make this election credible.

3.3 Election Date Versus Election Period

It remains unclear whether the elections will take place on consecutive days beginning on Sunday May 29 or several consecutive Sundays beginning on May 29, but the announcement of establishing a "period" ending on June 20, indicate the latter as a more likely option. Past national elections in Lebanon have been

conducted over periods of up to 4 weeks. The rationale behind this system given to the IFES team is that Lebanon has not trained (nor do they have the capacity to train) adequate numbers of electoral staff to manage the election in a single day.

IFES has learned that past elections have called for 5,800 polling stations throughout Lebanon with 500 voters per station (separated by gender). The number of polling stations may, however increase by up to 10 percent depending on new inclusions and on changes in the electoral law; including the potential inclusion of about 270,000 18, 19 and 20 year olds.

Should a 10 percent increase come into effect, for example, there would be approximately 6,380 polling stations. If 3 staff need to be trained per station, that would total 19,140 trainees. While this is a considerable number of temporary workers, it is by no means unusual (based on IFES direct past experience in many countries). It would not be terribly difficult to recruit and train this number of temporary election workers.

For the elections to take place in a single day, Lebanon should set a goal to train enough staff (20,000 based on 3 per station). This action would help avoid the unnecessary administrative burdens and costs associated with such an extended polling period in a country with the geographic and population size of Lebanon². In addition, it would absolve any questions regarding the potential influence of voters who normally vote last and are unduly exposed to exit poll leaks or the actual publication of results from regions that normally vote first.

Alternatively, an increase in the number of voters per station of even as few as 100 voters (from 500 to 600) would reduce the number of polling stations needed and thus the number of temporary workers needed. Such an increase is well within election planning standards and should not result in Election Day problems.

The question remains as to whether either of these options is technically feasible for the May elections. The IFES team is currently investigating recruiting and training practices as well as the willingness of political actors to accept changes of this nature.

3.4 Lack of An Official, Printed Ballot Paper

There is no provision in the Act for a standard, official ballot. Thus, none is used. Voters receive, from candidates' agents (not from polling staff) outside the polling stations, one or many little papers with printed lists of registered candidates. The law provides for a voter to write (in advance and privately) a list of candidates on a piece of paper, but they usually use the lists provided by agents. Problems resulting from this practice include:

- Increased control by candidates' agents and possibly intelligence agents (State or otherwise) over the electorate. They can pressure the voters to use a particular list using the tradition and culture of obligation and loyalty;

² Little over 3,000,000 registered voters in a territory less than 11,000 km²

- Secrecy is jeopardized as lists may be identified by the candidates' agents from the way in which candidates are listed or by paper color. By law the paper should be white, but this is disregarded;
- A voter should be able to write in a registered candidate of their choice. However, the lists given intentionally have no space for write-ins. Although voters may cross out names (and this is done often) this practice creates further pressure to restrict voter's choice; and
- The system allows the opportunity for rejecting ballots on improper grounds, as the lists are technically objectionable under the law and the objection may be taken selectively.

The electoral law should be amended to require an official ballot of registered candidates – printed as presented by the parties in a random order as determined by the election administration. Such a ballot would allow voters to “tick” the names of the candidates of their choice in a number no larger than the number of seats that are being contested in his/her electoral district. The Law should also leave the actual design of the ballot paper to the electoral administration.

3.5 Voting Age

The current voting age in Lebanon is 21. The typical voting age in most democracies around the world is 18. In talking with a wide range of Lebanese about this, it has become apparent that Lebanese citizens in general are not uncomfortable with lowering the age to 18 and allowing voters younger than 21 (18, 19, 20) to vote. Nevertheless when the question is posed as to why it has not been changed, responses have been expressed in terms like “it would not be acceptable to politicians” or “politicians are somewhat afraid that the inclusion of younger voter may tilt the race towards violence.”

Statistics indicate that allowing voters 18, 19 and 20 years of age to vote would not result in a significant change in the confessional composition of the voters list based on the present demographic trend. In other words, statistics show that the Muslim population is faster growing than the Christian one, so logically, including the 18, 19 and 20 year olds will not change the fact that either at 18 or at 21, these individuals will become voters. The IFES team will confirm this assumption upon access to more sophisticated databases as described above.

The Lebanese authorities should look to amending the electoral law to reduce the voting age from 21 to 18. Since most of the responsibilities of adulthood pass to Lebanese citizens upon turning 18, it logically follows that such citizens should also have the right to vote. This change to the law would also be a visible step towards bringing Lebanon into the realm of international norms for the conduct of democratic elections.

4. PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSION

4.1 Domestic observation

On Monday, April 25, 2005, 27 organizations launched a coalition, lead by the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE) to observe the May elections.

At the press conference (widely attended by the Lebanese media) LADE's leaders outlined the coalition's plans to train and deploy some 3,000 national observers to polling stations across the country.

Other Lebanese non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are expected to also join LADE prior to the election. The IFES team met with LADE prior to this update and will meet with them several times over the course of the mapping mission to discuss other, longer-term activities associated with the coalition member activities post-election and about continued networking nationally and internationally.

One coalition member organization, the Lebanese Centre for Policy Studies (LCPS), appears to have the resources needed to conduct exit polling or a quick count. However, caution should be exercised in regard to the conduct of exit polling in Lebanon at this time. Exit polling in this environment may be counterproductive or even prejudicial to the secrecy of the vote, which is already heavily compromised. Furthermore, if elections will take place over several weeks, exit polls may have a drastic influence on voter behavior.

A quick count exercise, however, may be possible if a sample of polling stations is adequately determined and a specific number of observers are trained to gather information and report effectively into an efficient database. LCPS appears interested in learning more about the subject and IFES sees a potential area of support for them.

4.2 Access to Media and Media Monitoring

Access to media is acknowledged as a major issue which needs to be legislatively addressed. Article 68 of the electoral law, which forbids campaigning in the media, has been selectively applied in past elections. There is no sign this will change for the upcoming elections. This means certain players, notably Amal's Nabih Berri, who owns NBN TV, and Hariri's bloc with their Mustaqbal media, will be favored over those parties with no access to media (such as the FPM). Since almost every Lebanese media outlet (print or electronic) covers news with a clear bias towards their ownership's political alignment, this situation is particularly problematic.

The issue of media access is widely discussed, but has not been addressed in terms of putting in place regulations that can be enforced nor is there the political will to enforce them equitably. The amendments proposed indicate an intention to stiffen the penalties and the length of the period of the prohibition. Yet, there is still no mention of equitable access or monitoring to equitably enforce the law and ensure access.

A media monitoring effort should be conducted. It is common for such monitoring to be conducted by NGOs, observers and even the EMB. The results of such an effort should be made available in a series of public reports along with statistics about coverage of campaign activity.

Maharat ("Skills") is an association of journalists (and a LADE's coalition member) for the training of young journalists in investigative reporting. Maharat has expressed interest in engaging civil society in discussions on the media's role in elections after the upcoming electoral process is complete.

4.3 Voter Education

A “get out the vote” campaign does not seem necessary given the momentum and level of awareness surrounding the political processes currently taking place, which includes the electoral process. However, should there be changes in the election law there will be a need for a voter education campaign to educate the Lebanese electorate on those changes and their impact on the Lebanese electoral system. It is unclear how prepared the Ministry of Interior is to develop a campaign of this nature.

Other coalition members have expressed interest or even plan to conduct voter education activities. These will be confirmed during the interviews scheduled for the coming weeks. The Lebanese Physically Handicapped Union, for example among other activities supported by IFES, will campaign to raise awareness of the disabled communities about their political rights during an election period. They have also presented amendments to the electoral law concerning the particular issues of access and tools for the disabled voters.

In terms of a long term voter/civic education campaign, the main obstacle appears to be reaching acceptable consensus among the different sects and sectors on what core messages and concepts are common to all. IFES has been informed that a civic education curriculum took years to develop precisely because such consensus was difficult to achieve. IFES will continue to explore this matter in the coming days.

Depending on the scope and nature of potential changes to the election law, a campaign of voter education should be developed and implemented to explain the changes in the law to the voters. Also, preliminarily, IFES recommends the development of a voter/civic education campaign aimed at younger generations, to include young voters and future voters. Such a campaign while potentially controversial stands a good chance of making a long-term impact on the attitudes of youth on democratic participation.

4.4 Electoral System Reform and Political Financing Debate

In the post-May 2005 election environment IFES can play a role in providing substantive input in the areas of electoral system reform and political finance. The IFES team anticipates that these issues will be undertaken by many sectors among civil society once the electoral process is complete and parliamentary debates begin.

Comparative legislation on issues concerning election system design, political campaign financing, political party laws, etc. will likely be needed to assist the discussion among key actors. There will also be the need to develop simple materials which can enable discussion and elicit input from other groups such as students, and the less educated segments of the population.

Should the LADE coalition remain in place after the elections, it could be an avenue to encourage proactive citizen participation in such discussions. If the coalition does not remain in place, exploring the possibility of converging a diverse group of credible organizations would be necessary to then determine how to best contribute to this process.

4.5 Ineligibility, Disqualification and Exclusions

In the election law as it currently stands, there are a number of ways by which a Lebanese citizen may be deprived of their voting rights. Such disqualifications are found throughout the law and in some instances are arguably justifiable due of the nature of the cause (i.e. convicted felon). It is worth noting that several countries allow all prisoners to vote, as democratic participation is seen as a way of inclusion and rehabilitation. The list does, however, include some matters that are less serious, such as “passing an unbalanced check” which, while unclear, appears to be equated with fraud. Overall, the lack of grouping of disqualifications in one part of the law is confusing.

In the past, the Lebanese military was excluded from voting. This was changed in 2000, but is apparently applied inconsistently. Continued exclusion of the military from democratic participation could serve to marginalize the military and exclude them from normal civilian life. Such a situation could generate or perpetuate a feeling of distance from other citizens that can be dangerous to ongoing democratic development.

IFES recommends that the list of disqualifications be reviewed and minimized and the option of requiring deprivation of democratic rights be made a specific part of a court sentence and thus, at the discretion of the court.

5. POLITICAL COMPETITION

After the recent formation of a caretaker government under the premiership of Najib Mikati, the political situation in Lebanon has found some equilibrium. The political players are beginning to state their preferences concerning the election law. While the situation is still fluid, it is expected that once a date for the elections has been announced, alliances will rapidly start to openly form and the campaigning will begin. The following is an assessment of the current political situation and anticipated events in the coming weeks up to the elections, based on interviews with Lebanese politicians and local analysts. This analysis is preliminary and subject to change.

5.1 The Syrian Withdrawal

With the last Syrian troops leaving the country this week, their absence is being felt on all levels in society. In the political sphere, two effects are particularly significant:

1. The culture of fear and intimidation is quickly disappearing. The heads of the security apparatus have already been suspended. The lack of fear is giving way to a more open debate, but it is also opening up conflicts that the Syrian presence repressed, notably over Hizbollah, the right to bear arms and a responsibility for civil war crimes.
2. The Syrian loyalists are now on the defensive. The most optimistic estimates give them 50 seats in the new parliament. The prospect of a victory for the opposition has had the following effect: Several pro-Syrian politicians are joining the opposition. Others may opt for new alliances, or seek to play on differences in the opposition camp. The exact nature of these alliances will to a large extent depend on the electoral law. If the law adopts the smaller constituencies (*qada*),

some independent politicians, like Michel Murr in North Metn, may survive courtesy of their local power base. However, if it is based on larger districts (*muhafada*), most observers expect the opposition to win all of the seats in the electoral districts of Beirut, Mount Lebanon, the North and most of the Bekaa.

5.2 Changes in Political Alignments

The killing of Hariri considerably expanded the anti-Syrian opposition to include most of the Sunni, Druze and Christian leadership. With the "Bristol-gathering" (a growing multi-confessional opposition) holding regular meetings and formalizing their alliance, plans are being made to run on joint opposition lists, which according to all estimates would assure the opposition a comfortable majority in the new parliament.

5.3 The Opposition

The backbone of the opposition is a coalition of the late Rafiq Hariri's bloc, to be led by his son Saad, the Christian Qornet Shahwan grouping and Druze leader Walid Jumblatt's bloc. These three movements have largely overlapping interests, and have so far cooperated closely, both on their preferences for electoral law and in terms of electoral slogans.

Other groups in the opposition include the Democratic Left, Kata'ib, the Lebanese Forces and Michel Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement, as well as several independent politicians, some of them close to Maronite Patriarch Nasrallah Sfeir, others with social democratic agendas. The Lebanese Forces and the Aounists, whose leaders appear destined to return to political life in Lebanon before the elections, are considered dark horses in the opposition, and their rising mass appeal on the Christian street is causing Qornet Shahwan considerable concern.

Preserving unity in the opposition seems to hinge on its ability to contain and perhaps accommodate these populist Christian movements. The formulation of a joint political program, to be expected in the run-up to elections, is another potential source of splits in the opposition ranks.

5.4 The Loyalist Camp

With most independent pro-Syrian politicians seriously threatened by the opposition, observers expect few other candidates than those aligned with the electoral lists of Amal and Hizbollah to be elected to parliament. Owing to their solid base in the Shiite population, most observers expect their parliamentary blocs to keep their current size, although some expect Amal to incur substantial losses.

Hizbollah's adaptation of a middle way between the opposition and the Syrians has earned them a central position. On the popular level, they have not alienated the masses who sympathize with the legacy of Hariri. On the political level, they have succeeded in gaining the protection of opposition leaders like Walid Jumblatt, who has been mustering international support for annulling the stance in Resolution 1559 which talks of disarming Hizbollah. Financially, Syria, which used to facilitate and profit from the transfer of Iranian funds and weapons to Hizbollah, will suffer heavy losses, whereas Hizbollah itself will be able to rely on alternative means.

Amal, who was leading the now defunct Ain at-Tineh pro-Syrian camp, finds itself in a more difficult situation. If Amal does not strike a deal with Hizbollah, observers estimate, they may see their bloc in parliament diminished by a third of its size. Hizbollah may win votes directly from Amal, and so may leftist parties and a recently formed "third way" Shiite grouping under the leadership of Sayyid Muhammad Amin. However, Amal's leader Nabih Berri is known for his ability to maneuver the political landscape, although he may not be able to resume his long-time position as Speaker of the Parliament. More moderate elements in Amal could also gain from the need to negotiate with the opposition.

Other loyalists groups, including the Baath Party, the Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party and independent candidates, are severely threatened and will seek to protect themselves by making new alliances or will simply join the opposition. However, observers expect the electorate to punish "recent converts" and opposition politicians may also use their credibility to tarnish people who worked with the Syrians.

5.5 Election Date – A Political Perspective

It is in the interest of Qornet Shahwan and Hariri's Dignity bloc to hold the elections quickly, before the return of Aoun and Ja'ja, which may upset the balance in the Christian districts, and before the momentum of sympathy for Hariri diminishes (many of their political opponents believe Hariri's Dignity bloc's current size to be "inflated"), or before splits start to appear in the opposition. A quick election would also seem to favor the traditional elites (*zu'ama*), because they fear the rise of populist movements. Whereas Aoun's FPM and LF in principle prefer a short postponement, they appear ready to comply with the wish of the other opposition.

In principle, most loyalists favor postponement, which would allow them to play for time and provoke cracks in the opposition. In particular, Hizbollah may wish to appear accommodative to international opinion and accept elections on time.

Those who argue for postponing the elections include FPM and LF, but also leftist groups and civil society groups who argue that regulating the media and checking illicit funding of campaigns cannot be done if the elections are held right away. A postponement of one or two months would allow for a proper public debate surrounding a new election law rather than rushing it through, so the argument goes.

5.9 Election Campaign: Issues and Expectations

The electoral campaign will start once there is fixed a date for the elections. The campaigning is expected to revolve around the same issues that have shaped the public debate since the death of Hariri, principally:

- A struggle over the "the real opposition." Many of the forces now in the opposition camp worked closely with the Syrians until recently. This paradox, and the call for all Syrian influence in Lebanon to cease, will in particular be utilized by LF and FPM;
- The fight against corruption in state and society and restoring the battered economy; and

- Finding the truth about Hariri's death, regaining full independence and democracy.



CENTER FOR TRANSITIONAL and POST-CONFLICT GOVERNANCE

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- A Delimitation Expert (arrived May 7/departed May 13).

This update continues IFES' focus on gaining a fuller understanding of the political situation and general environment in view of the electoral process during a time of great fluidity and change. It presents preliminary findings on the election structure and election administration. This report should be considered preliminary, and thus the information presented will be subject to significant modification or elimination from the final report.

1. GENERAL OVERVIEW

Events in recent weeks have centered on two notable themes. First, the political blocs have held a series of negotiations regarding the demarcation of electoral districts in Lebanon. Second, the Parliament has failed to make revisions to the 2000 electoral law. At this writing, it appears that no amendments will be made to

the 2000 law. Therefore, the elections—now scheduled to commence on May 29, 2005—are likely to be held under the 2000 law. In addition, as pointed out in IFES' first report, a structured political party system is absent. Against this backdrop, political forces continue to operate in a fluid system of alliances and arrangements among individuals who derive power from a combination of factors. These factors include religious confession, family/social status and economic influence.

Nevertheless, the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri contributed to a more cohesive opposition to Syria's hegemony over Lebanon among Sunni, Druze and Christian communities. This opposition received massive support, resulting in the composition of a new government, which has since called for elections, the withdrawal of Syrian forces, and the replacement of the heads of the Lebanese security services. These changes amount to a political earthquake in a country that has long been used to forming its alliances around Syrian support. However, now that two of the three main objectives of the opposition have been achieved (the final, still pending, objective is discovering the truth about Hariri's murder), the opposition is starting to show signs of fracture. Furthermore, there are signs that this fracture is happening along sectarian lines.

IFES is particularly concerned about the fact that the Ministry of Interior will still manage these elections without the desired independence from government influence. Fundamental aspects of democratic institution building require public discussion and transparent decision-making— including the establishment of an independent electoral management body, the potential reform of the election system, the review of the system of representation, and issues concerning creation and strengthening of political parties and political financing laws. Once a new parliament and government have been formed, the political will to discuss these issues may not be as keen. This uncertainty continues to pose a serious challenge in forecasting the scope and nature of the long-term technical assistance that might be necessary. It also makes it difficult to identify viable opportunities to promote transparency and equity in the political process.

2. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Parliament did pass an amendment to shorten from 30 to 21 days the time between calling the election and holding the first poll. At the same, Parliament extended its mandate to June 20, 2005, allowing time to conduct the election over several weeks—four consecutive Sundays beginning on May 29, 2005—and time to consider amendments to the 2000 law. The media and political actors continuously speak of the possibility of "a new election law," but this has consistently turned out to mean "an amended law" (using the 2000 or the 1960 laws as a reference point) particularly with regard to electoral districting.

2.1. Amendments of Interest

On April 28, 2005, a Parliamentary Commission met to debate a series of amendments, including the question of demarcation of electoral districts. By May 5, 2005, when the election was called, it seemed that amendments were nearly impossible, leading to the conclusion that the election will be based on the 2000 law. Key amendments currently pending, but unlikely to be considered are:

- Reducing the voting age to 18;

- Adding money laundering as a disqualifying offence for voters and candidates;
- Strengthening the provision that forbids double voting;
- Adding the mother's name to future records in the electoral lists (after the 2005 election);
- Clarifying the count responsibilities of the registration committees;
- Including monopolies among the benefits a member may not hold, and including family in the prohibition in order to reduce conflict of interest;
- Strengthening provisions to ensure voting secrecy;
- Limiting spending on publicity to 150 million Lebanese Pounds (approximately \$100,000) per candidate;
- Forbidding exploitation of financial position to offer benefits;
- Forbidding the incitement of sectarian sensitivities;
- Revising the media political publicity limitation law; and
- Increasing fines and penalties.

At this stage, interest is focused on amendments that would change the basis for districting from *muhafazat* (six administrative districts) to *qada* (many small electoral districts). During this period, parties and religious sects have made, broken and remade deals to enable certain actors to survive, regardless of which system prevails. Those who have not succeeded in building alliances will likely suffer most from this process. A fundamental political battle remains over the size and form of the districts. The gap between those who support a law based on *qada* and those who support *muhafazat* has proven impossible to bridge, leaving the 2000 law as the only possible compromise to ensure that elections are held on time. However, the unusual shape of many districts under this law makes it unviable for future elections. For example, some claim that in the case of the villages of Besharra and Dinnieh in the North, two non-contiguous districts were put together in order to marginalize Christian voters. A fuller discussion of this issue is found in section 3.2.

IFES therefore reiterates its earlier point that a comprehensive and transparent national discussion on electoral reform and electoral districts must be held in Lebanon and a new law must ultimately be agreed upon for use in future elections. IFES recommends that a post-election forum be held on this topic to stimulate debate and offer reliable information to interested parties.

2.2. Secular System Versus a Confessional System

The present system recognizes the deeply ingrained tradition of confessional communities, the role of religion in political allegiances, and the added layer of complexity that resulted from the Syrian influence. Rafiq Hariri's assassination and the events that followed unified a broad-based national sentiment behind real independence and finding justice. This national unity crossed religious boundaries and some say could even be a turning point away from the dominance of confessional politics. Although often mentioned, this significant change of system is not anticipated by many.

The Ta'if Accord envisaged a move away from the confessional base. To soften this change, the Accord proposed a stepping stone: a Senate with members representing religions and sects. This is mentioned in the Constitution:

Article 22: With the election of the first Parliament on a national, non-confessional basis, a Senate is established in which all the religious communities are represented. Its authority is limited to major national issues.

A number of details, such as the means of choosing members and its jurisdiction, are not stipulated in the accord. However, if implemented, this section of Ta'if could be a means to move from a confessional parliament to a mixed formula.

The full implementation of Ta'if, an issue that has surfaced in several IFES meetings, would open an opportunity for the international community and IFES in particular to support civil society groups involved in the public debate regarding political and electoral reform. This is a very sensitive issue and will be determined only by the gradual resettlement of Lebanese opinion.

2.3. Political Parties

There is no law specifically regulating political parties, but they must register under the 1909 Law of Associations. This is the same law under which all non-profits or associations register. The law regulates legal status, identification and legal liability, but it has no bearing on the political function of political parties. The problem is that if parties are not duly registered under specified regulations and procedures, they could do things for candidates that the candidates are forbidden to do. Also, there are reported cases of the government requiring certain parties to be authorized by decree. There is no apparent legal basis for this. Such practices open the possibility for government interference.

In the absence of a political party law, IFES hold the view that at a minimum, parties should be required to register for an election. Registration can facilitate control of expenditures and also control of other behavior, such as signage, improper influence, offering inducements, etc. Given Lebanon's current, deep-rooted political practices, drafting and adopting a political party law seems, at best, a long-term notion.

2.4. Aspects of Political Finance

There are no limits regarding campaign finance contributions or expenditures specified by law. (An amendment came before Parliament but was never debated). The absence of limits gives an unfair advantage to wealthy groups. The ability to influence voters through illegal means increases all the time, and vote buying and selling is increasingly harder to counteract.

Given the lack of political finance regulations, the following aspects and challenges need to be examined:

- 1) the role of financial and in-kind contributions, political expenses, and reasonable limits on each;
- 2) balancing full transparency of political accounts with security and privacy issues;
- 3) reporting and disclosure of political party and campaign finance accounts;
- 4) ineffective and biased enforcement;
- 5) abuse of state resources in campaigns; and
- 6) vote buying.

Solutions to these challenges should be designed to promote transparency and accountability in a way that involves the government, political parties, civil society groups, the media and academics.

3. ELECTORAL DISTRICT DELIMITATION

The sectarian system in place has major repercussions not only for key leadership positions,¹ but for parliamentary elections as well. When the 1989 Ta'if Accord ended the Civil War, Lebanon had not held parliamentary elections since 1972.² The Accord included a number of political reforms relevant to the formation of a parliament, which later became part of the constitution. The Accord established that the parliament was to be composed of 108 seats (increased to 128 seats in 1992) and that these seats were to be divided equally between Christians and Muslims and proportionately among the denominations of each sect, as shown in Table 1³:

3.1. Table 1. Distribution of Parliamentary Seats by Religious Sect⁴

Religious Sect	Number of Seats
Maronite Catholics	34
Sunni Muslim	27
Shi'ia Muslim	27
Greek Orthodox	14
Druze	8
Armenian Orthodox	5
Greek Catholics	5
Alawites	2
Armenian Catholics	1
Protestants	1
Other Groups	1

Voters are assigned to electoral districts, and each district is represented by a group of members of parliament (MPs) who generally run as members of a list for their district. For example, 10 seats are assigned to the Baalbeck/Hermel district, allocated as follows: 6 Shi'ite, 2 Sunni, 1 Maronite and 1 Greek Catholic. Each voter in this district votes for 6 Shi'ite candidates, 2 Sunni candidates, and so forth—regardless of the voter's religion.

This system encourages individual candidates to form joint lists prior to the elections, so that voters can simply choose a pre-designated slate of candidates. Although voters are permitted to cross off the names of candidates from a particular list and add others (a practice known as *al-tashtib*), this does not happen very often.

¹ The president is always a Maronite Christian, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim, and the speaker of the Parliament a Shi'i Muslim.

² Members of Parliament met in Taef, Saudi Arabia, in September 1989 and reached an agreement (the Ta'if Accord) ending the Civil War in Lebanon. This agreement later became part of the constitution after it was amended by constitutional law no. 18, issued in September 1990.

³ The Ta'if Accord included a number of political reforms pertinent to the unicameral Parliament, including: Part I, Section 2 (4) The electoral district shall be the governorate, Part I, Section 2 (5) Until the Chamber of Deputies passes an electoral law free of sectarian restriction, the parliamentary seats shall be divided according to the following basis: a. Equally between Christians and Muslims, b. Proportionately between the dominations of each sect, c. Proportionately between the districts

⁴ Parliament passed Election Law # 154 on 22/7/1992 raising the number of MP's from 108 to 128. This law also distributed parliamentary seats by sect and by electoral district. This move was a violation of the Ta'if Accord.

These features of the electoral system make the structure and composition of the electoral districts quite significant to the outcome of the election. There is no doubt that Lebanese leaders have recognized the importance of crafting electoral districts to favor their own interests.

3.2. Recent Approaches to Delimiting Electoral Districts in Lebanon

The Ta'if Accord stipulated that future parliamentary elections would be held on the basis of governorates, or administrative divisions, referred to as *muhafazat* but only "after the administrative divisions of the country were revised." Currently there are six administrative districts: North Lebanon, Beirut, Mount Lebanon, Beqaa, Nabatiyya and South Lebanon.

The theory behind adopting these divisions as the electoral districts was simple: candidates in each of these large districts would have to appeal to a broader multi-sectarian constituency of voters in order to win. It was hoped that this would strongly discourage sectarian extremism.

However, a different set of districts was used during each of the three elections since the signing of the Ta'if Agreement (1992, 1996 and 2000)—none corresponding precisely to the *muhafazat*. Many argue that new electoral districts were promulgated for each election to ensure a pro-Syrian outcome in each instance.

Many commentators believe that, prior to the 1992 elections, Syrian officials feared that some of their significant allies would gain election success by securing votes from outside of their tribal and sectarian communities. In Mount Lebanon, for example, Druze militia chieftain Walid Jumblatt and his political allies faced opposition from the Christian majority, who favored rival Druze candidates aligned with the more moderate Arslan family. A new electoral law was passed that designated some *qadas* (rather than the entire *muhafazat*) within Mount Lebanon as separate electoral districts. By limiting the district to the predominantly Druze population of the Shouf and Aley districts alone, the election of Jumblatt and his allies was assured. In 1996, elections in Mount Lebanon were again held at the *qada* level with exactly the same effect. (In 1996, the new electoral law established most *Muhafazat* as electoral districts but divided the *Muhafazat* of Mount Lebanon into six electoral districts.)

The electoral districts were completely redrawn for the 2000 elections. At the close of 1999, the head of Syrian military intelligence in Lebanon, General Ghazi Kanaan, and Bashar Assad held a series of meetings with Lebanese Prime Minister Salim al-Hoss, Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri and other politicians to produce a new electoral law, ultimately producing a total of 14 electoral districts.

North Lebanon was split into two districts—possibly to ensure the election of Agriculture Minister Suleiman Franjeh and other Syrian allies— by combining the *qadas* of Bsharri, Akkar and Minyeh-Dinnieh despite the fact that these areas are not geographically contiguous. Mount Lebanon was divided into four districts. Once again, areas in which Druze predominated were awarded their own electoral district to elect Walid Jumblatt and his allies. The district of Metn was created to consolidate support for Interior Minister Michel Murr. In order to reduce the number of seats won by former prime minister Rafiq Hariri, a powerful critic of the new Lebanese regime, Beirut was divided into three electoral districts—one for Hariri and the other two designed to incorporate the power bases of his two main rivals for leadership of

the Sunni community, MP Tammam Salam (District 2) and Prime Minister Hoss (District 3).

By manipulating the size and composition of the electoral districts, the election of MPs supportive of the pro-Syrian regime was once again assured in 2000. A corollary effect of this gerrymandering⁵ of electoral districts has been that only 30 of the 64 Christian representatives in the current parliament were elected from majority Christian districts. The other 34 came from districts annexed into larger Muslim districts, and consequently were elected by Muslim voters (mostly favorable to Syria at the time).

3.3. The Delimitation Approach Adopted for the 2005 Elections

Prime Minister-designate Najib Miqati's government had a number of proposed options to consider for electoral districts for the 2005 parliamentary elections. One proposal before parliament was to implement the provision of the Ta'if Agreement that calls for employing the *muhafazat* as electoral districts.

- One version of this approach was to use the current majoritarian system in conjunction with the *muhafazat*. As a general rule, pro-Syrian politicians have supported this approach as a means of gaining more seats in parliament, while the opposition has typically favored smaller voting districts.
- Another version of this proposal was to introduce proportional representation along with the *muhafazat*. The *muhafazat* would serve as multimember electoral districts in which candidates would be elected in proportion to the votes cast for their parties. Both Hizbollah and Amal have at times supported this second proposal, as have the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) and the Lebanese Forces (LF).

Another popular proposal was to divide Lebanon into smaller electoral districts coinciding with the *qadas*, and pair this districting with a majority representation system. A draft electoral law was in fact prepared to this effect (and in line with the 1960 electoral law), and it was due to be voted on the day after Rafiq Hariri's assassination.

Portions of the Christian opposition, in particular Maronite Patriarch Nasrallah Sfeir, embraced the use of *qadas* as electoral districts. It was generally understood that opposition candidates, particularly Christians and Druze, would benefit the most from this approach because they would be more likely to secure seats in their respective strongholds if the districts were kept small. However, Jumblatt has not come out in favor of the *qada*-based proposal.

A third option, briefly considered, was a possible compromise between the two previous electoral systems that some observers have said Miqati might support: the implementation of a mixed electoral system that includes single-member electoral districts, a majority vote requirement and a proportional representation component.

⁵ Gerrymandering refers to the manipulation of electoral district boundaries to favor one political party or group at the expense of others.

Voters would simultaneously elect a candidate to represent their electoral district and a list to represent their political affiliations.⁶

The option that was ultimately adopted was to employ the 14 electoral districts used for the 2000 elections.

4. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION AND ELECTIONS SECURITY

By law, the Ministry of Interior runs the elections and appoints election officials and registration committees, which ultimately become the counting and the returning committees. These appointed committees have very wide responsibility, as they administer both the electoral lists and the voter count, which are key pre-election and post-election functions. It is arguable that such government control is the greatest single threat to the fairness of the upcoming elections. Indeed, there are wide allegations and evidence of a very selective application of the law. There are many aspects of the election subject to selective enforcement of regulations. A biased administration can sometimes be achieved by mere inactivity. The end result can be a lack of transparency and a reduction in public confidence in the fairness of the elections.

The absence of an independent electoral body to administer elections remains a central concern of IFES. While increased scrutiny by party/candidate agents and domestic and international observers will provide an environment encouraging more open and transparent administration of these elections, the conduct of the polls by the Interior Ministry is still a substantial concern. Generally the incumbent status and authority of the government gives it many unfair advantages over other election contenders. Government control of the entire election process is unnecessary and undesirable and gives the sitting government the following advantages:

- initiative, timing and location of official acts;
- staffing of election committees in charge of voter registration and counting and compilation of results);
- the ability to promulgate administrative decrees;
- administration of most steps surrounding voter lists;
- the count of the votes; and
- selective enforcement of rules.

The present situation is particularly unfortunate because the committees that have these wide powers were appointed before the Syrian withdrawal and may be tainted by that association.

Selective application of rules is alleged to occur in such areas as:

- voter registration and dealing with inclusion, deletions and changes;
- purging deceased voters;
- determination of questionable votes by government appointed committees; and
- controlling print and electronic media and political messages.

⁶ A mixed electoral system was first employed by Germany. It is becoming increasingly popular – particularly in Europe, Latin America and Central Asia.

At present, the call for an independent electoral commission is limited to specific circles, mostly among civil society organizations. Although a bill was presented to establish one, it was not debated, probably because it was introduced just moments before the assassination of Rafiq Hariri.

A final and fundamental concern is whether an "independent" commission could really be independent if established in the current environment. In a country where there is still concern that even the judiciary is not sufficiently independent, this issue must be addressed with care. A commission clothed in respectability and independence, but not able to overcome political pressures, could further tarnish the credibility of institutional processes and practices in Lebanon. Therefore, it may be advisable to address the creation of a truly independent electoral management body together with issues related to the independence of the judiciary.

4.1. Voter Register and Voters' List

The integrity of the voter list needs to be further examined due to an estimated 9 to 10 percent of "excess electors" on the list. The IFES team has also been informed of estimates of 15 percent of the list being military and persons residing overseas. Other sources estimate that the percentage of registered electors that live overseas could be much higher than 15 percent. To date, none of the sources interviewed by the IFES team has claimed that "exclusion" of electors from the voter register or list is a major problem.

4.2. Voters' Cards

Although forged cards are not thought to be widely used to vote illegally, the security of the voter registration cards is a concern from a technical perspective, because the cards can be easily forged:

- The photograph is pasted but not stamped or embossed, so it can easily be replaced.
- The card does not carry the mother's name. Because some names are very common, the father's name is often not sufficient for precise identification.
- The card is punched each time after voting, but not marked each for a specific election.

If the election administration becomes contentious, the security of the voter card and fears of "double voting" (using forged cards to cast more than one ballot) could become an issue. The fundamental problem is control over distribution of the cards. There are many cases where cards have not been picked up or have not been issued, but political agents very often get all the cards for a village and distribute them against the promise of a vote. Such violations are contrary to Article 67 but are reportedly extensive. Clearly enforcement of the law should be tightened. No one should have custody of the card except the voter.

Also, an absolute requirement for the voter to have a voter card may be too rigid. Because of the small size of polling stations, identification is not usually a problem and other forms of identification could be considered. However, universal access has to be balanced against the risk of fraud. Once the electoral register is updated, new, more secure voter cards could be designed and issued, which could increase the

credibility of both the voter cards and the election process itself. Also, Lebanese citizens carry a plastic ID card for identification purposes (banking, legal transactions, etc) that contains the holder's picture and the name and surname of the mother, thus overcoming the issue of homonyms. The card does not, however, contain the religious affiliation, and this is an essential issue during elections. Consideration should be given to adding the religious affiliation to these cards and accepting them as proof of identity at the polls. Since they are not so easily forged, these ID cards seem to comply with standards of reliability and security, and therefore separate voter cards would not be necessary. This, however, is a long-term option and not a viable option for the May 2005 elections.

It remains IFES' view that a short-term solution to the question of voter card security would be to select credible identity documents (in terms of both public perception and of real security), which could be required in addition to the voter card at the polls.

4.3. Election Date Versus Election Period

PM Miqati set a 10-day deadline for agreeing on an electoral law in a policy statement approved by Parliament on April 27, 2005. This 10-day period expired on May 7, 2005. Therefore, according to the 2000 election law, elections will commence on May 29, 2005, and will continue on three successive Sundays. The schedule is as follows:

- Sunday May 29, 2005 - Beirut
- Sunday June 5, 2005 - Southern Lebanon
- Sunday June 12, 2005 - Bekaa and Mount Lebanon
- Sunday June 19, 2005 - Northern Lebanon

The explanation most often given for not having a single day for polling is security, specifically not having enough security forces to protect all polling stations. Another explanation is that Lebanon does not have enough trained electoral staff to manage the election in a single day, nor the capacity to train additional staff.

On the other hand, holding the polls on one day has advantages with regard to election security, cost and the integrity of the process. Technically speaking, a better option would be to consolidate the polls in one day. Much larger countries with more complicated topography and access conditions do have elections in one day.

Some countries require extended periods of voting due to severe geographic or demographic complications, but even in such cases, polling normally occurs on consecutive days. Moreover, such extended voting raises the challenge of protecting partial results so that voters are not influenced by partial results on subsequent election dates.

4.4. Lack of an Official, Printed Ballot Paper

There are currently no provisions in the standing electoral law that call for an official pre-printed ballot paper in Lebanon. In addition to this serious concern, IFES feels that voter secrecy is undermined in the following ways:

- In the absence of an official ballot, the use of a provided list is common;

- The small number of voters per polling station in an intimate community connected by religion tends to diminish the secrecy of the vote. This, combined with the fact that Lebanese often vote in the presence of their family, tends to remove anonymity at the polls;
- The law states that the vote is secret, but this is regarded as optional. Procedures to ensure secrecy are not established or enforced; and
- Because Lebanese citizens vote at the place of family origin, the big list promoters offer them transportation, which is a very effective form of pressure to vote for the list.

As a result of these factors, pressure is frequently applied and secrecy is jeopardized. The practice of voting at the place of family origin is well entrenched and not unpopular in a small country. It may not change in the near future. However, the other factors could and should be addressed as follows:

- Secrecy should be made an absolute requirement. Voter education campaigns highlighting this principle as a right and obligation are recommended.
- The law should be amended to require an official ballot printed on the authority of an independent electoral commission. This would require political alliances to be determined well in advance so that ballots could be printed on time. This could be the reason for resistance to such a measure, since political negotiations continue and change up until the eleventh hour.
- The electoral law should be amended to require an official ballot of registered candidates printed in a random order as determined by the election administration. Such a ballot would allow voters to “tick” the names of the candidates of their choice up to the number of seats that are being contested in the electoral district. The Law should also leave the actual design of the ballot paper to the electoral administration.

5. PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSION

5.1. Voter Education

It remains IFES’ view that any last minute changes in the election law will require a voter information campaign to inform the Lebanese electorate of those changes and their impact on the Lebanese electoral system. It is unclear whether the Ministry of Interior is prepared to develop a campaign of this nature.

At the moment, with the polling period fast approaching, IFES recommends that support continue to be provided to organizations that can identify, right before and during this polling period, specific and fundamental (response-based) messages for voters. Supplementary support could be granted to those groups or organizations capable of effectively and very quickly producing and adequately distributing voter information materials to encourage voters to request their voter cards, to highlight the importance of the secrecy of the vote, and to encourage voting by conscience (“do not sell your vote” and “vote for candidates of your choice”).

5.2. Domestic observation

To date, the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE) has recruited close to 600 observers and continues its efforts to reach the stipulated goal of 3000 observers for its domestic observation mission. It is important to note that, although encouraging, the number of observers is not as important as their capacity, while maintaining neutrality, to deploy strategically and devise appropriate means to collect and process timely and accurate field data for objective analysis. A systematic approach to electoral observation requires appropriate tools when working with such a large and diverse group of volunteers whose level of education and interests varies so significantly. IFES has recommended to LADE's Director that all efforts be made to prepare such tools. Certainly, if technical support of this nature is requested or viable, IFES recommends that it be granted.

The European Union has provided two international experts, one to support the domestic observation training and the other to advise on voter education activities.

5.3. Access to Media and Media Monitoring

During election periods, it is not that uncommon for media houses to agree to abide by a code of conduct to facilitate an open and fair environment for voter information. Self-restraint and moderation by the different media outlets is often preferable to a highly regulated or restricted environment. Given that in Lebanon there are no regulations concerning equitable access to media for campaign purposes, the adoption of a code of conduct would be constructive and valuable. A media monitoring effort should probably be conducted to ascertain adherence to the code. Such monitoring is commonly conducted by NGOs, observers and even the election management body (EMB) or government agencies responsible for enforcement of media regulations. Reports and statistics about the fairness of campaign coverage should be made available to media houses and to the public, so that voters are aware of biased or unfair reporting.

5.4. Out of Country Voting

Lebanon has a diaspora that has been estimated to be at least double the size of its population. Out-of-country voting is controversial at best because some claim it would mainly benefit a particular sect. More research is needed on this issue given that, to best of our knowledge, there are no accurate, documented figures to support claims one way or another.

A possible area of technical support would be to measure and establish the location and composition of the Lebanese Diaspora. This would allow discussions about voter eligibility, citizenship and the political implications of out-of-country voting to be based on acceptable data.

Some sources continue to state that the confessional composition of Lebanese nationals overseas (registered or not) significantly differs from the country's confessional make-up. Out-of-country voting could become highly charged based on the existing perceptions that certain confessions would benefit some more than others. The IFES team will continue to explore feasible ways to better determine if these perceptions are well founded.

5.5. Relocation

There are many people who live away from the family home. Hundreds of thousands of people were displaced as a result of the civil war, and others have moved voluntarily for work or other reasons and now live elsewhere.

The law requires everyone to vote “at home”—their family’s place of origin. The war displaced people from their family homes, and some have had difficulty establishing the right to vote in their home localities.

The requirement to vote at the family home appears at first to be an unreasonable limitation on mobility and democratic rights. However that is not the view of most Lebanese. In a small country, they feel it is right and proper that they should vote in the place of their family’s provenance. This tradition could continue to be recognized and respected, but consideration could be given to allowing the option of requesting the right to vote in a new location at the voter’s will, hence establishing a connection to representation based on place of residence.

5.6. Exclusion of Military from Voting

The law initially excluded the military from voting. This was supposed to be changed in 2000, but it was applied inconsistently. It is still in the current law.

The new circumstances that follow the departure of Syrian troops may not warrant a blanket exclusion of the military. They were perceived almost as a separate force in the state outside the civilian world. However, continued exclusion could marginalize the military and exclude them from normal life. The military are properly established to protect civilians, but that does not place them outside society. They should be eventually made to feel a part of the society they protect.

5.7. Deposit by Candidate

The law requires a deposit of 10 million Lebanese Pounds (\$7000). This deposit is returned only if the candidate is elected or gains at least 10% of the vote. This is seen as a heavy burden that favors wealthy candidates and groups. Legal consideration may be given to reduce the deposit to 1 million Lebanese Pounds or less, but retain other conditions such as return of the deposit.

6. POLITICAL COMPETITION

6.1 Historical Background to the Elections

Lebanon’s fourth parliamentary elections since the end of the civil war come at a time when political life is only beginning to come to terms with the fundamental changes brought about by Syria’s swift withdrawal. The formation of a caretaker government under the premiership of Najib Miqati lent some equilibrium to the political situation, and it seems likely that elections will be held on time by the end of May. Strong differences persist over the election law, but the law of 2000 has nevertheless been adopted, and the political players in Lebanon are now starting their campaigns. This section of the report reviews the key players, including political parties, non-aligned groups and individuals; their expected electoral strategies and alliances; and the issues that unite and divide the Lebanese political landscape.

6.2 The Syrian Retreat

The last Syrian troops left the country on April 26, and their absence is being felt at all levels of society. In the political sphere, three effects are particularly salient:

1) The culture of fear and intimidation is disappearing fast. The heads of the Lebanese security apparatus have been replaced. The fear is giving way to a more open debate, but also opening up conflicts that the Syrian presence repressed, notably over the right of Hizbollah to bear arms and the responsibility for civil war crimes. In particular, General Aoun is returning, and the amnesty law of 1991 has recently been reconsidered, after 45 MPs expressed support for amending the law to allow the release of Christian leader Samir Ja'ja'. However, Speaker of the Parliament Nabih Berri has until now—most recently on May 7—refused to call a parliamentary session to vote on the issue, and it remains to be seen whether Ja'ja' will be freed before the elections. Another resurfacing issue is the plight of Lebanese prisoners in Syrian prisons, which has recently triggered large demonstrations in front of Parliament. Some expect that the involvement of Syrian secret police (*mukhabarat*) in previous elections will not be repeated in these elections, which may tilt the results in favor of the opposition.

2) Most importantly, the Syrian loyalists, until recently known as the "Ain at-Tineh Group," are on the defensive, with the effect that this coalition has practically fallen apart. The most optimistic estimates give them 50 seats out of 128 in the new parliament. With the prospect of an opposition victory, several pro-Syrian politicians are making overtures to the opposition, often in the form of new alliances that seek to play on differences in the opposition camp. The exact nature of these alliances depends to a large extent on the electoral law and how it defines the electoral districts. In case elections are held in smaller constituencies (*qada*), some independent politicians may survive courtesy of their local power base. But if they are based on larger districts (*muhafazat*), most observers expect the opposition to win all seats in the electoral districts of Beirut, Mount Lebanon, the North and some of the Bekaa valley (see section 3 of this report). As the prospect of *muhafazat*-based law became increasingly likely during the last week, President Lahoud and his son and their close aides in the Murr family, as well as other Christians formerly allied with Syria, came out in support for a law of smaller districts, in a move many observers interpreted as an attempt to save their own political future by allying with Maronite Patriarch Nasrallah Sfeir. Druze leader Walid Jumblatt openly mocked such "sudden conversions," pointing out that President Lahoud himself was one of the main architects of the 2000 law and that his sudden volte-face therefore carries little credibility.

3) Despite Jumblatt's shrugging off loyalist attempts to stir up the balance of the opposition, it has indeed been shaken considerably by disagreement over how to run the elections. These disagreements run deep and will only become more apparent as opposition members find themselves in direct competition over the limited places on electoral lists. The Syrian withdrawal took away the fixed center of gravity in the political spectrum that their supremacy had supplied for decades. In its place has come a myriad of possible alliances between the various Lebanese political forces, which cannot be contained by a coalition as broad as the anti-Syrian coalition when its main common concern,

the Syrian withdrawal, has already been achieved. In a sense, this “re-Lebanonization” or redeployment of the political order is increasingly likely to change the polarization between loyalists and opposition camps that the country has known since Hariri’s death. There have even been some suggestions that if political alliances fracture sufficiently, this may allow Syria to remain a powerbroker in Lebanon. More than half of Parliament and the cabinet still consist of pro-Syrian figures. A complex list of shared interests governs post-Syria Lebanon and will influence how electoral alliances are struck. To make sense of this political landscape, the following analysis will look at the parties and groups one by one before drawing conclusions.

6.3 The Opposition

The killing of Hariri considerably expanded the anti-Syrian opposition to include most of the Sunni, Druze and Christian leadership. Despite the recent fractures in what was until April called the “Bristol gathering,” plans are still being made for the opposition to run on joint lists, which according to all estimates would assure the opposition a comfortable majority in the new parliament.

The backbone of the opposition is a coalition of the late Rafiq Hariri’s bloc, minus its Syrian-backed MP’s like Nasser Qandil, who will be replaced by opposition representatives, to be led by his son Saadeddin Hariri, the Christian Qornet Shahwan grouping and Druze leader Walid Jumblatt’s bloc. These three movements have largely overlapping interests and have cooperated closely, at least until the recent disagreement over the electoral law.

Other groups in the opposition include the Democratic Left, Kata’ib, the Lebanese Forces and Michel Aoun’s Free Patriotic Movement, as well as several gatherings and independent politicians, some of them close to Maronite Patriarch Nasrallah Sfeir, others with social democratic agendas. The Lebanese Forces and the Aounists, whose leaders both hope to return to political life in Lebanon before the elections, are considered “dark horses” or unknown quantities in the opposition, and their rising mass appeal on the Christian street is causing Qornet Shahwan considerable concern.

Preserving unity in the opposition seems to hinge on its ability to contain and perhaps accommodate these populist Christian movements. The formulation of a joint political program for post-elections Lebanon, to be expected in the run-up to elections, is another potential source of splits in the opposition ranks. So is the forming of lists, which will inevitably introduce an element of competition between and even within its different movements.

1) Hariri’s Dignity Bloc

Carried on by broad popular support and sympathy for late Sunni leader Rafiq Hariri, his parliamentary bloc, now under the leadership of his son Saadeddin, is expecting to repeat the good result in Beirut in the 2000 elections, when their list won all but one seat in the three electoral districts of the capital. The MPs who were included in this list due to Syrian pressure will not be rerunning and will be replaced. The group is also looking to expand its influence in other parts of the country, particularly in the North and in Sidon, where Rafiq Hariri’s popular sister Bahia is running. It is hoping that the result could expand their parliamentary group from its current 18 seats (including two

vacant seats of the slain Rafiq Hariri and Bassam Flaihan) to 24 or more, which would make it a kingmaker of the opposition, possibly paving the way for the premiership of Saadeddin al-Hariri. However, some believe that he is still too young and inexperienced and that an older figure would be more suitable.

At one point, the unity of the bloc seemed threatened by a simmering dispute between Bahia Al-Hariri and Rafiq Al-Hariri's wife and sons over the leadership of the movement, but Bahia eventually backed down and thereby also publicly abandoned the prospect of becoming the first female Prime Minister of Lebanon.

Hariri's critics have been arguing that the group's popularity is "inflated" by the events and by the very successful media campaign conducted by its rich and professional Future media group, and that under normal circumstances they would not win more than a third of the seats that they are expected to win in these elections. One Christian loyalist even suggested that the way the Hariris have played with emotions is "unconstitutional." Confident of their large popular support, they have been much more concerned with holding elections on time than with the exact nature of the election law, although large constituencies would arguably be in their favor. As a consequence, they see the 2000 law as a favorable solution and have not objected to the decision.

2) Walid Jumblatt's Popular Socialist Party

After the death of Hariri, Jumblatt appeared as the spearhead of the opposition. But over the last month, he has been maneuvering to accommodate Hizbollah and Amal, which has caused him to fall out with parts of the Christian opposition. In particular, the tacit deal struck with the Hariris, Amal and Hizbollah over the 2000 law infuriated many Christian politicians. Jumblatt is known to habitually oscillate from one position to the other, last demonstrated when he visited Patriarch Sfeir and pledged support for the *qada*-based law shortly after supporting a plot to force through the 2000 law. This ability to strike deals across the whole political spectrum may prove a vital asset for his parliamentary bloc in the run-up to elections.

A potential challenge facing Jumblatt is for his bloc to defeat rival Druze leader Talal Arslan on his home turf of the Shuf and South Metn districts. Arslan, whose recently formed Democratic bloc pledged loyalty to Syria, is trying to forge alliances with LF and Aoun, in order to woo Maronite voters to strengthen his relative weak hold on the Druze population. This project seems doomed to fail, and it is expected that Jumblatt, partly due to his popularity and partly due to his well-organized movement, will be able to retain his 17-member bloc in Parliament.

3) The Qornet Shahwan (QS) Gathering

A grouping of Christian politicians under the moral, and often also political, leadership of Maronite Patriarch Sfeir, the QS Gathering was founded in 2001 as an attempt to unite the heavily fractured Christian community. Most of the Gathering's members are local *zu'ama* (traditional leaders) with a strong power-base in restricted areas of Mount Lebanon. The Phalange Party,

Lebanese Forces and Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement have also been involved in the QS, but remain on the fringe and are in effect forces in their own right.

Because of the limited range of the QS, many of its members feared the prospect of being included in larger constituencies where they would have to vie for Muslim voters, particularly in Beirut where the influence of Hariri is overpowering. According to the 2000 law, certain districts of Christian East Beirut and Muslim West Beirut would thus be included in the same district, whereas the draft law from February 2005 was designed to "clip Hariri's wings" in Beirut by confining his influence to the areas where he was already certain to win. The QS is at the heart of the row over the election law, since they feel that they would risk being underrepresented in elections according to the 2000 law. However, their members have pledged to run, despite slamming the law.

4) The Democratic Forum and Independent Christians

The Democratic Forum mainly consists of Christians with a slightly more progressive profile than the QS Gathering, but also includes a number of highly competent Muslim politicians. Principal figures are MP Nassib Lahoud, who retains good relations with the Syrians and has been mentioned as a presidential candidate, and Musbah al-Ahdab, a popular liberal Sunni politician from Tripoli. Other independent Christian groups include the National bloc of Carlos Eddé, which may win a seat in Byblos.

5) Populist Christian Groups

a) The Phalange Party (Kata'ib)

The old Maronite party broke in two after former President Amin Jumayil returned to Lebanon in 2002 and protested against the party's pro-Syrian line. The Jumayil family still retains a power-base in the Metn and Kisrawan districts, and their break-away contingent now appears stronger than the official Phalange Party, under the leadership of Karim Pakradouni, who has been disgraced in the Christian community by his persistent support for Syria. Amin Jumayil wants to resurrect the old Christian party, which was founded in 1936 by his father Pierre Jumayil. At the moment, Kata'ib is rather on the fringe of the opposition and may opt to strike a deal with General Aoun in order to challenge the QS for vital seats in Metn.

b) The Lebanese Forces (LF)

The Lebanese Forces have been banned as a movement since the imprisonment of their leader Samir Ja'ja' in 1994. However, several local leaders with strong ties to the group will be running for Parliament, directly challenging candidates from the QS. The group is largely perceived as the most hard-line Christian party, and in case the electoral campaign becomes heavily influenced by sectarian discourse, the LF may win votes from their supposedly staunch "representation of the ordinary Christian." Since the assassination of Hariri, their influence, organization and indeed presence on the street has been drastically rising. The big question remaining is whether Ja'ja' will be freed before the elections, and if so how well he will re-adapt to the Christian political scene.

c) The National Liberal Party (Dory Chamoun)

Essentially a party of one family, the NLP still commands a certain following in the Maronite community and will be competing over a few seats in Beirut and the Metn.

6) The Democratic Left

This party was formed last year as a modern, reformed and anti-Syrian alternative to the Communist Party. It remains one of the only parties in Lebanon with no specific sectarian profile. Its leader, former head of the Communist Party Elias Atallah, has secured the party a strong base in the student population and among liberal, non-sectarian minded Lebanese. The long-term goal of the party is to abolish the sectarian system and work for a secular society.

In particular, the party hopes to challenge the big Shiite parties for representation in the South, although such a challenge would have been more successful in smaller electoral districts. The DL initially supported smaller districts (*qada*) but viewed elections on time as a higher priority and therefore accepted the 2000 law. Its hope is to win three seats in Parliament, in the South, Mount Lebanon and Beirut.

7) Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement (FPM)

With Aoun returning on May 7, at this writing, his influence on the elections is still very hard to predict. Since the FPM has not participated in any previous elections, it is very hard to gauge its actual size. Some analysts believe that the fears of the Qornet Shahwan are founded and that Aoun may in fact be the big surprise of the elections, while others believe that such an estimate is nothing more than a reflection of the General's own megalomaniac self-perception. The FPM's optimism is mainly based on the fact that Aoun remained a steadfast opponent to Syrian presence for fifteen years, whereas most other members of the opposition worked with the Syrians until last year. As an outsider, he is not tainted by a history of bad governance and corruption in post-war Lebanon, and his calls for structural reforms, abolishment of sectarianism and fight against corruption may therefore be taken seriously by people and win him votes. Finally, there is a deep longing in the Christian community for a unifying leader who will represent them and act powerfully, after more than twenty years of internal disagreement and disunity.

Aoun's unique position as an outsider with a potentially large popular following introduces the possibility of a major upset of the present balance of power in several districts. Jumblatt fears that his rival Talal Arslan will include Aoun on his list and pose a real challenge to his supremacy in the Druze regions. In the Christian mountains, Aoun may opt to ally himself with Amin Jumayil's Phalange Party in order to win crucial seats from President Emile Lahoud's allies. There are even suggestions, based on actual contacts and convergent views on the electoral law, that the FPM would make an alliance with Hizbollah in the South, expanding the list of possible seats in Parliament even further. If these hopes materialize and Michel Aoun, who is a Maronite and therefore eligible to serve as president of the republic, is able to

conduct a successful campaign, the question remains whether he would accept nomination. When asked directly, he and his followers answer rather opaquely, but the possibility remains.

6.4 The Loyalist Camp

Since the popularity of the opposition is threatening to oust most independent pro-Syrian politicians, observers expect few such candidates, other than those aligned with the electoral lists of Amal and Hizbollah in the districts of the South and the Bekaa, to be voted into Parliament. Owing to their solid base in the Shiite population, the parliamentary blocs of the two Shiite parties will most likely keep their current size, although some expect Amal to incur substantial losses. Finally, some independent loyalist who became MPs due to Syrian support will be replaced by representatives closer to Amal and Hizbollah, which will serve to diminish their losses.

1) Hizbollah

The Shiite "Party of God" currently commands a bloc of 13 members in Parliament. In the last few months, Hizbollah has adopted a middle way between the opposition and more staunchly pro-Syrian groups and individuals. Although formally in the Ain at-Tineh group, the Shiite party kept lines of communication open both to Jumblatt and Sfeir. This prudent strategy, along with the sheer political weight and their importance in the regional game, has earned them a central position. On the popular level, they have not alienated the masses who sympathize with the legacy of Hariri, and on the political level, they have succeeded in gaining the protection of opposition leaders like Walid Jumblatt, who has been mustering international support for annulling the part of Resolution 1559 that calls for disarming all militias.

Financially, Syria used to facilitate and profit from the transfer of Iranian funds and weapons to Hizbollah and will suffer from their withdrawal, whereas Hizbollah itself will be able to rely on alternative means. The question remains when and under what circumstances the party would be willing to make the full transition from an armed movement to a political party. For the moment, a French-Saudi deal to protect the movement diplomatically seems to have postponed the issue at least until after the elections. The identity of the party as a resistance party will in the future be seriously challenged from inside and outside of Lebanon. Therefore, Hizbollah's new campaign will focus more on their role as a defender of the Lebanese nation and their rejection of American involvement in the region and in Lebanese affairs in particular.

2) Amal

The other large Shiite party, which was leading the now defunct Ain at-Tineh pro-Syrian coalition, finds itself in a more precarious situation. Its leadership's unbreakable loyalty to Syria has long corresponded poorly with the mixed feelings that many Shiites have towards Syria's behavior in Lebanon. If it fails to make an electoral alliance with Hizbollah, observers estimate, Amal could see its Liberation and Development bloc in Parliament diminished by one-fourth. Hizbollah may win votes directly from Amal, and so may leftists parties and a recently formed "third way" Shiite grouping under the

leadership of Sayyid Muhammad Amin (although this would have been more likely if the elections had happened in smaller districts). Despite these challenges, Amal's leader Nabih Berri is known for his ability to maneuver the political landscape, and although he may not be able to resume his long-time position as Speaker of the Parliament, his party will still wield considerable influence in the new parliament. Some observers also suggest that another effect of the elections could be to favor moderate elements in Amal, in light of the need to negotiate with the opposition and strike unorthodox deals in order to survive politically.

3) The Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party

The SSNP has a long history in Lebanon and a core of ideologically committed supporters spread out over most of the country. Its main reason for staying committed to Syria can be found in its strategic vision of the region. The party staunchly refuses to separate the Syrian and Lebanese tracks in the peace negotiations with Israel, and they have therefore remained loyal to Syria despite the turn in public opinion. But even though SSNP is known for its ideological fervor, over the last 15 years it also developed into one of the most strictly clientelist groups, and became largely dependent on Syrian support. The Syrian withdrawal has left the SSNP in a serious crisis, and it will depend on clever electoral alliances in order to regain any of its current four seats in Parliament. Party members hope that their candidates in the South and the Bekaa may be re-elected if they are included in the Amal-Hizbollah list.

4) The Baath Party

The Baath Party is in an even worse situation than the SSNP and is in danger of being minimized or even annihilated as a political force in Lebanon. Its MP in the Beqaa, Assem Qanso, has been one of the most publicly reviled figures since the death of Hariri and will almost certainly be excluded from Hizbollah's electoral list.

5) Independent Loyalists

A number of independent candidates outside of the Bekaa and the South, whose power rested on their close ties to the Syrians, are currently trying to maneuver out of what looks like an impending electoral defeat. These include President Lahoud's son, Emile E. Lahoud, and his son-in-law, several-times minister Michel Murr, and in the North, long-time minister Suleiman Franjeh. Threatened by defeat, they are attempting to protect themselves by making new alliances or simply by joining the opposition. They argue that their close contacts to Syria will be a necessary asset in post-elections Lebanon and that the opposition has alienated itself so much from the Syrian leadership that it will need support to rekindle economic links with Syria. They also express hope that the division between opposition and loyalists will disappear before the elections, thus opening the possibility for alliances based on personal connections in the Christian milieu. In particular, the Murr/Lahoud clan has contacts to Aoun as well as to several key figures in Qornet Shahwan, which they hope to be able to use to join larger electoral lists that would secure their political survival.

However, observers expect the electorate to punish “recent converts,” and opposition politicians may also use their credibility to tarnish people who worked with the Syrians. This can already be observed in the mocking reception that met their recent attempt to switch sides and defend the “Christian” *qada*-based law.

6.5 Players and Positions in the Debate

May 7, 2005, the day of the return of General Aoun, signaled the start of the electoral campaign. However, the debate in the weeks that preceded this decision is of great importance to understanding possible electoral reform in Lebanon.

For most parties, in particular the “core” opposition groups, holding elections on time was always the first priority. In the Christian areas, which are the most contested and difficult to predict, quick elections favor the traditional elites (*zu’ama*), who fear the growing rise of populist movements, whereas the FPM in principle preferred a short postponement, but will now bank on the ability of its leader to expand his group of supporters in the few weeks available. Most loyalists also favor postponement, which would have allowed them to play for time and provoke cracks in the opposition. As for the opposition, they will attempt to put their row over the electoral law behind them and remain unified until the end of the month.

Those who argued for postponing the elections also included leftists and civil society groups who believed that regulating the media and checking illicit funding of campaigns could be done with such little time to prepare monitoring. Besides, a postponement of one or two months would have allowed for a proper public debate about a new election law rather than rushing it through. There is considerable anger in many different camps in Lebanon that international pressure forced the elections, whereas a postponement could in fact have enhanced democratic practices. The same people also fear that momentum for changing the electoral law will be lost after the elections.

A change of the election system from the current majority system to proportional representation has slowly been surfacing in the public debate since January 2005, and the idea seems to be gaining momentum. Proportional representation is openly supported by Amal, Hizbollah, SSNP, FPM and LF, and more guardedly by other blocs in the opposition. However, the prospect of postponing the elections, which such a fundamental change would presumably necessitate, was enough for the opposition to decide to shelve the issue for now. Again, there is fear that the political will to effectuate such a change will dwindle once the elections are over.

IFES recommends that assistance be provided to Lebanese citizens who advocate for an electoral system that grants equitable representation to the myriad of Lebanon’s minorities. In the current system, large movements like Amal and Hizbollah in the Shiite community and PSP in the Druze community, monopolize the political representation of their sects. The metaphor of the electoral lists “steamrolling” smaller contestants in the large electoral constituencies is often used to describe the sense of marginalization experienced by these groups. A good example in these elections is the “third force” Shiite group of Sayyid Amin, who will not be allowed to join Amal and Hizbollah’s lists and therefore cannot hope to win any seats even if it actually represents a considerable part of the Shiite population. IFES believes democracy in Lebanon would be well served by a reform of the voting system and

the introduction of proportional representation in a form with which most Lebanese would agree. However, it is crucial that such reform be preceded by a proper public debate.

6.6 Election Campaign: Issues and Expectations

While the election campaign is in its earliest stages, one can already see posters and billboards in some parts of Lebanon. Judging from the contestants, it is becoming clearer that campaigning will revolve around the three issues already outlined in the first IFES interim report:

- 1) A struggle over the “the real opposition.” The opposition camp is largely comprised of LF and FPM. Now it appears that former or present loyalists seeking to discredit their opponents in the opposition may adopt a similar rhetoric.
- 2) The fight against corruption and restoring the economy. The Lebanese economy is still in danger of imminent collapse, and the parties and groups will be outbidding each other in presenting ways to attract Lebanon’s large Diaspora and, crucially, the investment it would bring to the country’s economy.
- 3) Finding the truth about Hariri’s death and regaining full independence and democracy. The UN investigation team is currently carrying out its work in Lebanon, and most observers expect it to come out with a conclusion that points the finger at Syria in stark terms without delivering final evidence. If the report is issued before the elections, this could have a reinforcing effect in the opposition’s drive to oust the current regime, and in particular in replacing President Lahoud and Speaker Nabih Berri.

The article in the electoral law that forbids campaigning in the media has only been implemented selectively in the past, and there is no sign that the rules of the game will change in these elections. This means that certain players, notably Amal’s Nabih Berri, who owns NBN TV, and Hariri’s bloc with their Mustaqbal (Future) media, will be favored over those with no access to media, such as the FPM. The funds available to lead a successful campaign also differ dramatically. The most well-endowed by far are the Hariris, but also PSP, Amal and Hizbollah have well organized propaganda units ready to produce posters, billboards etc. Finally, it must be considered that much of the campaigning outside of the cities in Lebanon happens on the grass-roots level, with whole villages pledging their support to certain candidates. Such patterns of voting are very ingrained in the political culture and thus difficult to change.



CENTER FOR TRANSITIONAL and POST-CONFLICT GOVERNANCE

LEBANON MAPPING MISSION Team Report

INTERIM UPDATE Beirut, Lebanon May 26, 2005

This is the third of three progress updates provided by IFES under the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS) agreement number DGC-A-00-01-0000400-00, award for “Lebanon Election Mapping.” These updates will be used to create the electoral map of Lebanon as described in the project proposal.

At the time of this report, the IFES team is comprised of the following members:

- A Political Competition and Oversight Expert (arrived April 9/departed May 4);
- A Field Operations Specialist (arrived April 9/departed April 28);
- A Participation, Inclusion and Security Expert, (arrived April 13);
- A Legal Framework Expert (arrived April 18/departed May 11);
- An Election Administration and Security Expert, (arrived May 15); and
- A Delimitation Expert (arrived May 7/departed May 13).

The Election Administration and Security Expert and the Delimitation Expert contributed to this report.

This update expands on topics already addressed in the previous two reports. Specifically, this update includes more detailed assessments of electoral district delimitation in Lebanon and of polling and counting procedures expected to be used during elections in Lebanon. To ensure that context is not lost, some of the background information from the previous two updates will be repeated here, although this has been kept to a minimum.

1. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

Elections in Lebanon are conducted according to a well-established set of procedures and by well-trained and often experienced poll workers. The procedures include many commendable and security-enhancing characteristics. There are, however, some areas of concern. This section will examine both the commendable and disconcerting aspects of these procedures. It should be emphasized that this assessment was done based on discussions with some polling officials,

party agents and officials of the Ministry of the Interior, and not on actual observation of the elections.

1.1. Selection of Polling Locations

Polling locations, mostly schools, are selected by the Ministry of the Interior. The Electoral Law stipulates the selection of polling locations based on certain conditions to ensure that:

- 1) all voters have access to a polling location (each village of 100 voters must have at least one polling station);
- 2) polling locations are not overcrowded (no more than 600 voters per polling station – normally classrooms); and
- 3) there are no more than 16 polling stations per polling centre – normally schools.

From the interviews conducted by IFES it seems that these provisions are generally followed.

1.2. Voters Lists and the Allocation of Voters to Polling Stations

The location of polling stations and the allocation of voters to polling stations are made known through publications of the Ministry of Interior. These publications can be purchased at newsstands. In addition, the voters list, which includes the allocation of voters to polling stations, can be purchased in both paper and electronic formats. Candidates readily purchase the list and use it to make sure that voters are informed of their polling locations. Political groups also purchase the list to check for accuracy and completeness. While some IFES sources allege the voter lists still contain some inaccuracies (as reported in the previous update), these measures definitely contribute to the production of more credible voters lists.

1.3. Selection and Training of Poll Workers

Every polling station in Lebanon is staffed by one Presiding Officer (or "president") and one or more clerks. These officials must be government employees and are normally teachers. No person is allowed to be an official in the area where they vote. These officials are compensated for their expenses (a fixed amount of \$200). All officials should attend training sessions, and all should receive a detailed training manual produced by the Ministry of the Interior. As mentioned in the previous reports, a major concern is that the government appoints all these officials, which gives the government control over the application of electoral procedures.

1.4. Candidate Representatives

All candidates are allowed to have a representative in every polling station in the district where they are running for office. In addition, every candidate is allowed to have one roaming representative for every five polling stations. This is a commendable measure that can increase the transparency of the elections.

Although the law stipulates that the Presiding Officer cannot prevent the candidate representatives from observing the elections, the Presiding Officer has the right to expel candidate representatives from polling locations for "causing disorder," a power that can be applied selectively.

1.5. Election Material

The day before the election, the Presiding Officer receives a kit with all the polling material required on election day. This kit includes:

- » The metal ballot box
- » Two locks, for sealing the ballot box during voting
- » The voters list
- » Envelopes (used by voters for their "ballot papers")
- » The voting screen
- » A video camera and television screen (used during counting – see below)
- » Several forms, including a report form used to record events of the day, a count tabulation form, a results form and a checklist to ensure that all tasks have been completed)
- » Blank pieces of white paper (to be available for voters to write down the names of the candidates they vote for)
- » An envelope with wax, to be used to return the results and reports after polling and counting)

The material generally seems to be of a good standard. Based on a cursory inspection, the election forms (used for reporting and tabulation of results) seem to be well designed and user friendly. It has been alleged that the voting screens may be insufficient, but this could not be corroborated.

1.6. Procedures in the Polling Station

Polling procedures are stipulated in detail in the electoral law (specifically articles 39 through 62). For the purposes of this discussion, the most important details of the procedures are as follows:

- » Before polling begins, the Presiding Officer checks that the number of envelopes for ballots is equal to the number of voters on the voters register.
- » The voters register is placed in such a way that the candidate representatives and observers can inspect it.
- » The open, empty ballot box is shown to agents before it is sealed with two locks (one key to be retained by the Presiding Officer and the other by one of the candidate representatives, usually the eldest).
- » The voter enters the polling station, presents the voting card to the Presiding Officer, who normally reads out the name of the voter aloud for all to hear. The Presiding Officer, the Clerk and one of the representatives sign in front of the voter next to the voter's name.
- » The voter receives an envelope and goes behind the voting screen, where he or she places the list containing the names of candidates in the envelope and then seals the envelope. The Presiding Officer must ensure that the voter is alone behind the voting screen.
- » The voter then puts the sealed envelope containing the list in the ballot box. (Handicapped voters may be assisted by another voter of her/his choice.)
- » The voter then certifies that she/he has voted by signing or putting a fingerprint next to her/his name on the voters list.

If applied, these procedures seem to be adequate to ensure voting secrecy. One should, however, look at the list (or "ballot") itself to judge the adequacy of the procedures to ensure voting secrecy.

- » Every voter can vote for a number of candidates equal to the number of seats allocated to that voting district. Seats are allocated by sect, and the voter can vote for the seats

allocated for every sect. For example, Baalbeck/Hemel has 10 seats (6 Shiite, 2 Sunni, 1 Maronite, and 1 Greek Catholic). Therefore, each voter, regardless of the voter's confession, can vote for 6 Shiite, 2 Sunni, 1 Maronite and 1 Greek Catholic candidates.

- » There is no official, printed ballot paper. Each voter can bring a pre-prepared list with the names of the candidates of her/his choice into the polling station to place in the official envelope. The voter can also write the names of the candidates on a blank piece of paper provided behind the voting screen.
- » Although candidates officially run as individuals, in practice they join in coalitions and present themselves to voters on joint lists. These candidates pre-prepare lists which they provide to voters to use when they vote. Although voters are allowed to scratch out names from the lists the parties provide to them, and add other names if they so wish, the lists are printed on pieces of paper so small that it is impossible to add names.
- » Reportedly, candidates find ingenious ways of determining who voted for them and who did not. For instance, they would prepare different lists with the names of the candidates written in a different order. They would then carefully record which voters received which lists to determine whether or not a specific voter used the provided list.
- » The lack of an official ballot paper and the practice of using lists pre-prepared by candidates create the conditions for a serious breach of voting secrecy.

1.7. Counting and Tallying the Results

When the last voter has voted, the ballot box is opened in the presence of the candidate representatives and observers. The Presiding Officer counts all envelopes, and reconciles the number against the number of voters who voted, as recorded on the voters list.

Each envelope is then opened individually, and the ballot paper is placed under the video camera and projected onto the TV screen, so that all present can see it. The Presiding Officer then reads out the votes contained on the paper. All present should agree on each vote. The clerk then records the vote on the tabulation sheet. This process continues until every envelope is opened and every vote counted.

Ballots deemed to be invalid are attached to a report form and sent with the results to the registration committees. A judge decides whether these votes will be counted or not.

Ballots are considered invalid if they include marks, offensive comments, or any script other than Arabic. If a ballot contains more names than the number of seats allocated, the names at the top of the list are counted first.

Once all votes are counted and certified, the Presiding Officer announces the result to all present in the polling station. The Presiding Officer then completes the result form. A copy of the results, signed by the Presiding Officer, is placed outside the polling station, and each candidate representative receives a copy of the results. This is a highly commendable practice, which helps ensure that results are not tampered with on the way from the polling station to the final tallying of the results.

Once the process is complete, all the ballot papers and envelopes are burned. This practice is very disconcerting, because it makes it impossible to recount or verify the result of any polling station.

The Presiding Officer completes a report of the day's proceedings. This report is signed by the Presiding Officer, the Clerk, and all the representatives present and placed, with a copy of the results, in an envelope and sealed with wax. These envelopes are handed to the registration

committees. These committees tally and then announce the results of the electoral district for all the candidates. They then hand the results to the Governor. The Governor, in turn, transmits the results to the Ministry of the Interior.

1.8. Overall Assessment

Lebanese electoral authorities have developed detailed procedures and forms to implement the electoral law. Many aspects of these procedures are commendable and should be retained in any reform of the electoral framework. Some aspects, specifically the lack of an official printed ballot and the destruction of ballots immediately after the count, could seriously affect the credibility of the electoral process and should be reconsidered when redrafting the electoral framework.

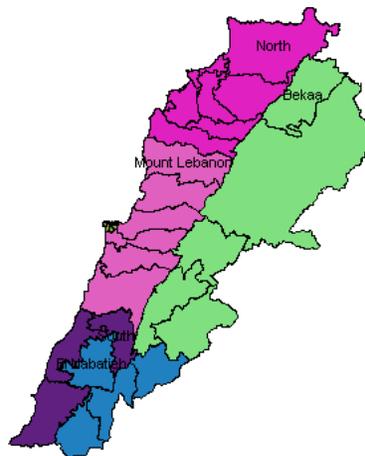
2. ELECTORAL DISTRICT DELIMITATION IN LEBANON

2.1. Recent Approaches to Delimiting Electoral Districts in Lebanon

When the 1989 Ta'if Accord ended the civil war in Lebanon, the country had not held parliamentary elections since the early 1970s.¹ The Accord included a number of political reforms relevant to the formation of parliament: It established that the parliament was to be composed of 108 seats (raised to 128 seats in 1992), and that these seats were to be divided equally between Christians and Muslims and proportionately between the denominations of each sect.² These reforms later became part of the constitution.

The Accord also stipulated that future parliamentary elections would be held on the basis of the governorates, or administrative divisions, referred to as *muhafazat*. The six administrative districts in Lebanon are as follows: North Lebanon, Beirut, Mount Lebanon, Beqaa, Nabatiyya and South Lebanon. The map below shows these six muhafazat (as well as the boundaries of the qadas that make up each muhafazat):

Map 1: Six Muhafazat of Lebanon



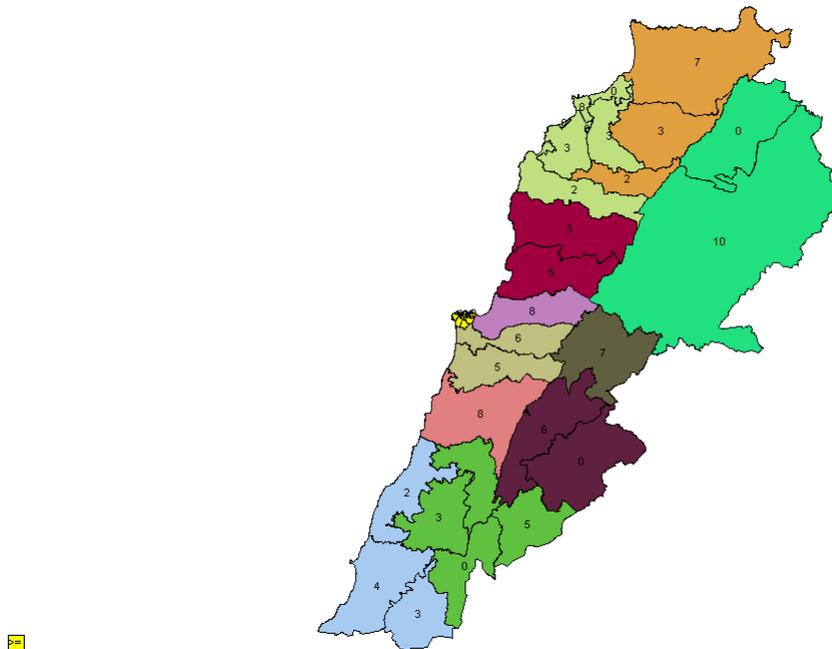
¹Members of Parliament met in Taef, Saudi Arabia, in September 1989 and reached an agreement (the Ta'if Accord) ending the civil war in Lebanon and instituting a series of political and other reforms. This agreement later became part of the Constitution after it was amended by constitutional law no. 18, issued in September 1990.

² The Ta'if Accord included a number of political reforms pertinent to the unicameral Parliament, including: Part II. Political Reforms: Section A. Chamber of Deputies: (4) The electoral district shall be the governorate; (5) Until the Chamber of Deputies passes an electoral law free of sectarian restriction, the parliamentary seats shall be divided according to the following basis: a. Equally between Christians and Muslims, b. Proportionately between the dominations of each sect, c. Proportionately between the districts

The electoral districts were completely redrawn for the 2000 elections. At the close of 1999, the head of Syrian military intelligence in Lebanon, General Ghazi Kanaan, and Bashar Assad held a series of meetings with Lebanese Prime Minister Salim al-Hoss, Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri and other pro-Syrian politicians to produce a new electoral law.³ These negotiations ultimately produced 14 electoral districts, each created using the qadas as building blocks, but none of which followed muhafazat boundaries precisely. The electoral districts were assigned parliamentary seats based on the qadas that composed each district. (Each qada has been assigned a specific number of sectarian seats, and these seats are added to produce seat assignments, by sect, for each electoral district.)

The 14 electoral districts, the boundaries of the qadas that make up each district, and the number of seats assigned to each district are displayed in the following map:

Map 2: Electoral Districts, the Qadas and the Seat Assignments for each Qada, 2000 Parliamentary Elections



After much discussion, the electoral districts in place for the 2000 parliamentary elections have been adopted again for the upcoming 2005 elections. Although a pro-Syrian regime is not likely to be the outcome, the decision to employ these electoral district boundaries will have a decided impact on who is elected to parliament.

2.2. Implications of Using the 2000 Electoral Districts for the Upcoming Elections

The decision to employ the 2000 electoral districts for the upcoming parliamentary election has important ramifications for both sectarian representation and for equality of representation across

³ See, for example, Joe Gebeily, *Lebanon's parliamentary elections, a test for democracy: A Lebanese Forces perspective*, [Lebanonwire](#), April 25, 2005.

districts. Although the impact on sectarian representation has been the more debated topic, the fact that these districts are considerably malapportioned should not be neglected.⁴

The voter registration list indicates that less than half—in fact, only slightly over 40 percent—of the Lebanese population is Christian.⁵ Given recent demographic trends, it is likely that an updated voter registration list would identify an even higher percentage of the voting population as Muslim. Despite this, half of the parliamentary seats in Lebanon have been reserved for Christians.

If seats in parliament were allocated on the basis of the population percentages alone, Christian sects would clearly be allotted less than half of the seats. Table 2, below, specifies the number of seats each religious sect would be allocated on the basis of population alone—if the highest remainder method of seat allocation were employed to apportion parliamentary seats.⁶

Table 2: Parliamentary Seat Allocation by Religious Sect

Religious Sects	Population (Total Number of Voters)		Representation Quota	Number of Seats Allocated Using Highest Remainder Method of Apportionment		Number of Seats Allocated Currently	
Sunnis	808692		37.83	38		27	
Shiites	631173		29.53	29		27	
Druzes	101645		4.76	5		8	
Alawites	35606		1.67	2		2	
<i>Muslim Subtotal</i>		<i>1577116</i>			<i>74</i>		<i>64</i>
Maronites	620933		29.05	29		34	
Greek Orthodox	238515		11.16	11		14	
Greek Catholic	137140		6.42	6		8	
Armenian Orthodox	91447		4.28	4		5	
Armenian Catholic	19315		0.90	1		1	
Evangelic Christian	17615		0.82	1		1	
Others	34105		1.60	2		1	
<i>Christian Subtotal</i>		<i>1159070</i>			<i>54</i>		<i>64</i>
TOTAL	2736186			128		128	
Population Quota	21376						

As the above table demonstrates, Muslims are allocated 10 fewer seats than their numbers alone would merit, and Sunni Muslims are especially under-represented. (The Druze, on the other

⁴ Malapportioned electoral districts are districts in which the population varies substantially – so much so that equality of representation is in jeopardy.

⁵ All of the voter registration statistics (including the population data by religious sect) that follow are based on the voter registration list supplied to IFES by Statistics Lebanon, a private consulting firm in Beirut.

⁶To calculate the number of seats to be allocated to each electoral district using the highest remainder method of apportionment, a population quota is derived by dividing the total population (in this case, the total number of registered voters) by the number of seats to be allocated. The population of each electoral district is then divided by this population quota to produce a representation quotient for each district. Each district is initially allocated the whole number of seats in its representation quotient. Then the fractional remainders of the representation quotients are ranked in order from largest to smallest. Seats are assigned in rank order of these remainders until all 128 seats are allocated. (The highest remainder method is commonly used to apportion legislative seats – this method was, for example, the approach used to apportion seats to the US Congress from 1851 until 1905.)

hand, are over-represented in parliament relative to their proportion in the population.) Christians, and especially Maronite and Greek Orthodox Christians, however, have more representatives elected to parliament than their population percentages alone would grant them.

Nonetheless, these numbers do not tell the whole story. In fact, parliamentary seats have been drawn in such a way as to ensure that well over half of the electoral districts are controlled by Muslim voters even if half of the members of parliament (MPs) are required to be Christian: in 10 of the 14 electoral districts (slightly over 71 percent of the electoral districts), Muslim voters are a majority of the electorate and therefore control who is elected to parliament. The table below indicates the religious composition of each electoral district, as well as the qadas that make up each of the electoral districts.

Table 3: Religious Composition of the Qadas and Electoral Districts

Electoral Districts	Muslim Voters	Christian Voters	TOTAL VOTERS	Percent Muslim	Percent Christian	Religious Composition of Electoral District
Achra	7531	44896	52427	14.4	85.6	
Mazraa	67272	6315	73587	91.4	8.6	
Saifi	439	9181	9620	4.6	95.4	
Beirut 1	75242	60392	135634	55.5	44.5	majority Muslim
Bashoura	38453	6571	45024	85.4	14.6	
Msaitbeh	47101	14213	61314	76.8	23.2	
Rmeil	227	28925	29152	0.8	99.2	
Beirut 2	85781	49709	135490	63.3	36.7	majority Muslim
Ain al-Mraisseh	8200	2347	10547	77.7	22.3	
Medawar	4825	36349	41174	11.7	88.3	
Mina al-Hosn	3204	10323	13527	23.7	76.3	
Port	6789	1841	8630	78.7	21.3	
Ras Beirut	19758	10062	29820	66.3	33.7	
Zoqaq al_Blat	38575	4622	43197	89.3	10.7	
Beirut 3	81351	65544	146895	55.4	44.6	majority Muslim
Baalbek	47648	4733	52381	91.0	9.0	
Hermel	33364	618	33982	98.2	1.8	
Bekaa 1	81012	5351	86363	93.8	6.2	majority Muslim
Bekaa 2	48184	83977	132161	36.5	63.5	majority Christian
Rashaya	25865	9560	35425	73.0	27.0	
West Bekaa	48559	19261	67820	71.6	28.4	
Bekaa 3	74424	28821	103245	72.1	27.9	majority Muslim
Jbeil	13995	51967	65962	21.2	78.8	
Kesrouan	1565	77860	79425	2.0	98.0	
Mt Lebanon 1	15560	129827	145387	10.7	89.3	majority Christian
Mt Lebanon 2	9496	136110	145606	6.5	93.5	majority Christian
	0	0				

Aley	7065	46603	53668	13.2	86.8	
Baabda	59597	78790	138387	43.1	56.9	
Mt Lebanon 3	66662	125393	192055	34.7	65.3	majority Christian
Mt Lebanon 4	92673	61315	153988	60.2	39.8	majority Muslim
Akkar	113534	61452	174986	64.9	35.1	
Bsharreh	84	42109	42193	0.2	99.8	
Dinnieh	63737	11715	75452	84.5	15.5	
North Lebanon 1	177355	115276	292631	60.6	39.4	majority Muslim
Batroun	3461	51767	55228	6.3	93.7	
Koura	7236	45602	52838	13.7	86.3	
Minieh	0	0	0	0	0	
Tripoli	254989	32299	287288	88.8	11.2	
Zghorta	6431	56276	62707	10.3	89.7	
North Lebanon 2	272117	185944	458061	59.4	40.6	majority Muslim
Bint Jbeil	83670	11879	95549	87.6	12.4	
Sidon	97913	23619	121532	80.6	19.4	
Tyre	115855	10793	126648	91.5	8.5	
Zahrani	0	0	0			
South Lebanon 1	297438	46291	343729	86.5	13.5	Majority Muslim
Hasbaya	30626	7165	37791	81.0	19.0	
Jezzin	10620	38740	49360	21.5	78.5	
Marjeyoun	65200	14577	79777	81.7	18.3	
Nabatieh	93375	4638	98013	95.3	4.7	
South Lebanon 2	199821	65120	264941	75.4	24.6	Majority Muslim

There are at least two important points worth noting that emerge from an examination of the above table:

- 1) Muslims compose a majority of the voters in 10 of the 14 electoral districts; and
- 2) A number of majority-Christian qadas (10 of the 16 majority-Christian qadas) have been submerged into Muslim electoral districts. (The qadas that have been shaded yellow in the above table are majority Christian qadas that have been combined with Muslim qadas so that the Christian voters are submerged in majority Muslim electoral districts.) For example, in North Lebanon, the almost exclusively Maronite Christian qada of Bsharreh, was combined with the Sunni Muslim-majority qadas of Akkar and Dinnieh—despite the fact that the electoral district created was less than compact—to produce an electoral district that is now over 60 percent Muslim.

As a result of this gerrymandering,⁷ well over half of the Christians that are elected to parliament are elected from majority Muslim districts. Table 4, below, indicates the percentages of Muslims and Christians in each electoral district, as well as the number of Muslim and Christian seats elected from each of these districts.

⁷ Gerrymandering refers to the practice of manipulating electoral district boundaries to favor one political party or group at the expense of other political parties or interest groups.

Table 4: Religious Composition of Electoral Districts and the Number of Muslim and Christian Seats Elected from Each District

Electoral Districts	Muslim Voters	Christian Voters	TOTAL VOTERS	Percent Muslim	Percent Christian	Muslim Seats	Christian Seats
<i>Beirut 1</i>	75242	60392	135634	55.5	44.5	2	4
<i>Beirut 2</i>	85781	49709	135490	63.3	36.7	3	3
<i>Beirut 3</i>	81351	65544	146895	55.4	44.6	4	3
<i>Bekaa 1</i>	81012	5351	86363	93.8	6.2	8	2
<i>Bekaa 2</i>	48184	83977	132161	36.5	63.5	2	5
<i>Bekaa 3</i>	74424	28821	103245	72.1	27.9	4	2
<i>Mt Lebanon 1</i>	15560	129827	145387	10.7	89.3	1	7
<i>Mt Lebanon 2</i>	9496	136110	145606	6.5	93.5	0	8
<i>Mt Lebanon 3</i>	66662	125393	192055	34.7	65.3	5	6
<i>Mt Lebanon 4</i>	92673	61315	153988	60.2	39.8	4	4
<i>North Lebanon 1</i>	177355	115276	292631	60.6	39.4	6	5
<i>North Lebanon 2</i>	272117	185944	458061	59.4	40.6	7	10
<i>South Lebanon 1</i>	297438	46291	343729	86.5	13.5	11	1
<i>South Lebanon 2</i>	199821	65120	264941	75.4	24.6	7	4
TOTAL	1577116	1159070	2736186	57.6	42.4	64	64
		Muslims elected from majority Christian districts				8	12.5%
		Christians elected from majority Muslim districts				38	59.4%

As this table shows, the majority of Christians (59.4 percent) serving in parliament are elected from districts that are majority Muslim in composition. However, only slightly over 12 percent of all Muslim MPs are elected from majority Christian electoral districts.

In conclusion, although the percentage of Christians serving in parliament is higher than the percentage of Christians in the voting population, the majority of these Christians are actually elected from districts in which Muslim voters predominate. This means that Muslim voters are actually choosing many of the Christian MPs.⁸

⁸ According to a statement issued by the Maronite Bishops Council of Lebanon: " Christian MPs who are elected by Muslim blocs cannot represent Christian voters, but rather the Muslim leaders on whose lists

Using the 2000 electoral districts for the 2005 parliamentary elections also has an important effect on equality of representation. The number of seats allocated to each electoral district does not necessarily relate to the relative populations of these electoral districts. In fact, in many instances districts are granted fewer seats than their numbers merit, while other districts have more.

Table 5, below, shows the number of seats to which each electoral district would be entitled based on population, as well as the actual number of seats.

Table 5: Seat Allocation by Electoral Districts

Electoral Districts	Population (Total Number of Voters)	Representation Quota	Number of Seats Allocated using Highest Remainder Method of Apportionment	Number of Seats Allocated Currently
Beirut 1	135634	6.35	6	6
Beirut 2	135490	6.34	6	6
Beirut 3	146895	6.87	7	7
Bekaa 1	86363	4.04	4	10
Bekaa 2	132161	6.18	6	7
Bekaa 3	103245	4.83	5	6
Mt Lebanon 1	145387	6.80	7	8
Mt Lebanon 2	145606	6.81	7	8
Mt Lebanon 3	192055	8.98	9	11
Mt Lebanon 4	153988	7.20	7	8
North Lebanon 1	292631	13.69	14	11
North Lebanon 2	458061	21.43	22	17
South Lebanon 1	343729	16.08	16	12
South Lebanon 2	264941	12.39	12	11
TOTAL	2736186		128	128
Population Quota	21376			

An examination of the above table reveals that several districts are over-represented (especially in the Bekaa Valley) while others (particularly in North and South Lebanon) are under-represented. Only a reallocation of seats to more accurately reflect the relative populations of the electoral districts can resolve the malapportionment.

This is not a problem that is easily rectified, however. As long as the confessional system, with its assigned number of sectarian seats, remains in place, it will be difficult to combine qadas in such a manner as to produce population equality across districts. Greater equality of representation could be achieved only if seats were assigned after the districts were constructed (rather than simply adding up the seats allocated to each qada after the districts are drawn).

they were elected; and they are forced to adopt their stands, not those of their Christian voters in their district." *Maronite Bishops in Lebanon Oppose New Electoral Law as a Threat to Christian-Muslim Relations*, Christian Today, May 13, 2005.

Attachments:

Appendix A: Religious Composition of Qadas and Electoral Districts

Appendix B: Seat Allocation by Sect, Qadas and Electoral Districts

Zahleh	30923	16574	668	19	48184	24127	14934	26712	8451	1747	1403	6603	83977	132161
<i>Bekaa 3</i>														
Rashaya	11409	65	14391	0	25865	1693	6988	612	33	25	63	146	9560	35425
West Bekaa	34504	13670	385	0	48559	7517	2543	8531	51	13	328	278	19261	67820
	45913	13735	14776	0	74424	9210	9531	9143	84	38	391	424	28821	103245
Mount Lebanon														
<i>Mt Lebanon 1</i>														
Jbeil	2068	11916	1	10	13995	46590	3013	1152	968	98	146	0	51967	65962
Kesrouan	374	1179	8	4	1565	69797	1956	3601	1498	785	223	0	77860	79425
	2442	13095	9	14	15560	116387	4969	4753	2466	883	369	0	129827	145387
<i>Mt Lebanon 2</i>														
North Meten	2508	3854	1879	1255	9496	65600	22534	14292	24804	6284	2596	0	136110	145606
<i>Mt Lebanon 3</i>														
Aley	1620	2907	18	2520	7065	26562	13844	4151	875	195	976	0	46603	53668
Baabda	7673	29776	22130	18	59597	59051	10749	6774	1123	593	500	0	78790	138387
	9293	32683	22148	2538	66662	85613	24593	10925	1998	788	1476	0	125393	192055
<i>Mt Lebanon 4</i>														
Chouf	42709	6340	43619	5	92673	47096	2278	11189	143	99	510	0	61315	153988
North Lebanon														
<i>North Lebanon 1</i>														
Akkar	104070	1787	78	7599	113534	25208	32833	2621	102	26	662	0	61452	174986
Bsharreh	75	6	0	3	84	40652	968	394	57	13	25	0	42109	42193
Dinnieh	63511	174	0	52	63737	5034	6482	168	5	4	22	0	11715	75452
	167656	1967	78	7654	177355	70894	40283	3183	164	43	709	0	115276	292631
<i>North Lebanon 2</i>														
Batroun	2730	688	8	35	3461	40263	9314	1916	214	60	0	0	51767	55228
Koura	6098	938	5	195	7236	11216	33586	537	95	25	143	0	45602	52838

Minieh														
Tripoli	227689	3770	58	23472	254989	8924	17715	2395	2705	361	199	0	32299	287288
Zghorta	6301	86	4	40	6431	52087	3322	619	110	138	0	0	56276	62707
	242818	5482	75	23742	272117	112490	63937	5467	3124	584	342	0	185944	458061
South Lebanon														
<i>South Lebanon 1</i>														
Bint Jbeil	2028	81635	2	5	83670	9059	121	2599	45	28	27	0	11879	95549
Sidon	38386	59439	79	9	97913	10174	804	11710	290	65	576	0	23619	121532
Tyre	10577	105264	3	11	115855	2472	690	5850	1168	143	470	0	10793	126648
Zahrani														
	50991	246338	84	25	297438	21705	1615	20159	1503	236	1073	0	46291	343729
<i>South Lebanon 2</i>														
Hasbaya	18533	631	11336	126	30626	1838	4007	915	35	22	348	0	7165	37791
Jezzin	1147	9066	404	3	10620	29772	1063	7626	92	54	133	0	38740	49360
Marjeyoun	2507	61929	758	6	65200	4568	6197	2735	71	27	979	0	14577	79777
Nabatieh	1846	91518	4	7	93375	3457	137	988	7	14	35	0	4638	98013
	24033	163144	12502	142	199821	39635	11404	12264	205	117	1495	0	65120	264941
TOTAL	808692	631173	101645	35606	1577116	620933	238515	137140	91447	19315	17615	34105	1159070	2736186

Appendix B: Seat Allocation by Sect, Qadas and Electoral Districts

Districts	Sunnis	Shiites	Druzes	Alawites	Total Muslim	Maronites	Greek Orthodox	Greek Catholic	Armenian Orthodox	Armenian Catholic	Evangelic Protestant	Others	Total Christian	TOTAL SEATS
Beirut	6	2	1		9	1	2	1	3	1	1	1	10	19
<i>Beirut 1</i>	<i>2</i>				<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>		<i>1</i>			<i>4</i>	<i>6</i>
Achra														
Mazraa														
Saifi														
<i>Beirut 2</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>			<i>3</i>		<i>1</i>		<i>1</i>		<i>1</i>		<i>3</i>	<i>6</i>
Bashoura														
Msaitbeh														
Rmeil														
<i>Beirut 3</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>		<i>4</i>				<i>2</i>			<i>1</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>7</i>
Ain al-Mraisseh														
Medawar														
Mina al-Hosn														
Port														
Ras Beirut														
Zoqaq al_Blat														
Bekaa														
<i>Bekaa 1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>6</i>			<i>8</i>	<i>1</i>		<i>1</i>					<i>2</i>	<i>10</i>
Baalbek	2	6			8	1		1					2	10
Hermel														
<i>Bekaa 2</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>			<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>				<i>5</i>	<i>7</i>
Zahleh	1	1			2	1	1	2	1				5	7
<i>Bekaa 3</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>		<i>4</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>						<i>2</i>	<i>6</i>
Rashaya														
West Bekaa	2	1	1		4	1	1						2	6

Mount Lebanon																				
<i>Mt Lebanon 1</i>		1			1	7													7	8
Jbeil		1			1	2													2	3
Kesrouan						5													5	5
<i>Mt Lebanon 2</i>						4	2	1	1										8	8
North Meten						4	2	1	1										8	8
<i>Mt Lebanon 3</i>		2	3		5	5	1												6	11
Aley			2		2	2	1												3	5
Baabda		2	1		3	3													3	6
<i>Mt Lebanon 4</i>	2		2		4	3		1											4	8
Chouf	2		2		4	3		1											4	8
North Lebanon																				
<i>North Lebanon 1</i>	5			1	6	3	2												5	11
Akkar	3			1	4	1	2												3	7
Bsharreh						2													2	2
Dinnieh	2				2															2
<i>North Lebanon 2</i>	6			1	7	6	4												10	17
Batroun						2													2	2
Koura							3												3	3
Minieh	1				1															1
Tripoli	5			1	6	1	1												2	8
Zghorta						3													3	3
South Lebanon																				
<i>South Lebanon 1</i>	2	9			11			1											1	12
Bint Jbeil		3			3															3
Sidon	2				2															2
Tyre		4			4															4
Zahrani		2			2			1											1	3
<i>South Lebanon 2</i>	1	5	1		7	2	1	1											4	11
Hasbaya	1	2	1		4		1												1	5

Jezzin					2		1					3	3	
Marjeyoun														
Nabatieh		3			3								3	
TOTAL	27	27	8	2	64	34	14	8	5	1	1	1	64	128



CENTER FOR TRANSITIONAL and
POST-CONFLICT GOVERNANCE

**LEBANON MAPPING MISSION
FINAL REPORT**

JUNE 2005

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CENTER FOR TRANSITIONAL and POST-CONFLICT GOVERNANCE

LEBANON MAPPING MISSION - FINAL REPORT June 2005

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CENTER FOR TRANSITIONAL and POST-CONFLICT GOVERNANCE

LEBANON MAPPING MISSION FINAL REPORT June 30, 2005

1. GENERAL OVERVIEW

This final report was prepared by IFES under the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS) agreement number DGC-A-00-01-0000400-00, award for "Lebanon Election Mapping." It is based on updates prepared by the IFES team presented to the United States Agency for International Development on April 25, 2005, May 15, 2005 and May 26, 2005. The majority of information contained in this report comes from assessments made prior to the elections.

The IFES team was comprised of the following members, all of whom contributed to this report:

- A Team Leader and Participation, Inclusion and Security Expert;
- A Legal Framework Expert;
- A Delimitation Expert;
- An Election Administration and Security Expert;
- A Political Competition and Oversight Expert; and
- A Field Operations Specialist.

All sections of this report aim to contribute to a full understanding of the general environment and the political situation surrounding the May-June 2005 electoral process in Lebanon during a time of great fluidity and change. Its findings on the electoral climate, structure and administration are based on a direct in-country analysis conducted before and during¹ the election processes. Recommendations, where made, are in reference to internationally accepted electoral principles, practices and standards and with the full understanding that most require legislative reform and substantial political negotiation among Lebanese circles.

Lebanon is unique in the Middle East due to its social makeup and its political system. There are 19 legally recognized religious sects or communities, broadly divided among Muslims and Christians, with the former enjoying an ever increasing majority.

¹ The first expert arrived in Lebanon at the beginning of April 2005. Team Members stayed throughout the process until the end of June 2005.

In 1943, the leaders of Lebanon's communities struck a historic compromise, known as the National Pact, within the larger context of their struggle for independence from French rule. The Pact essentially created a consociational democracy, a system where power was carefully divided among the various communities, based on their size at the time. This division of power helped ensure broad participation and unity among Lebanese in their quest for statehood. By 1946, the last French soldier had left Lebanese soil. However, in other periods since independence, the Lebanese have also experienced minor and major political instability, most notably during the war of 1975-1989, due to a failure of the political system to effectively manage internal divisions within the polity.

- The sectarian nature of Lebanese society certainly reflects the diverse religious make-up of the nation state, but not necessarily the implications on the existing, but wavering, political balance or the negotiations which allowed Lebanese citizens to vote in the 2005 elections. After French occupation in 1943, a confessional system was devised which divided the Parliament between Christians and Muslims. This system reserves key political positions for specific religious sects: the country's President must be a Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister must be a Sunni Muslim, and the Parliament's Speaker must be a Shiite Muslim.
- The assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hari on February 14, 2005 contributed to a more cohesive opposition among Sunni, Druze and Christian communities to Syria's hegemony over Lebanon. This opposition received massive support and resulted in the composition of a new government which called for elections on April 27, 2005, allowed for the withdrawal of Syrian forces on April 30, 2005 and replaced the heads of the Lebanese security services. These changes amounted to a political earthquake in a country long used to forming alliances around Syrian support and under its tutelage. While tensions deriving from Lebanon's sectarian system were contained during the period of Syrian tutelage, largely by excluding certain political figures and groups, these tensions are resurfacing with renewed force after the Cedar Revolution². The sudden absence of Syria from local politics has naturally caused a redrawing of the Lebanese political map, a process which has yet to settle.
- The different groups, including those that were part of the winning Taysyar al-Mustaqbal (Future Tide) coalition, were strong enough to win a majority in Parliament, but they were not able to reach consensus prior to the elections on fundamental electoral reform issues, particularly on the question of district demarcation. Other reform issues were left to the new Parliament to consider. These include the potential reform of the election system with a review of the system of representation, the establishment of an independent electoral management body, and issues concerning creation and strengthening of political parties and political finance laws. Some experts argue that a requisite for true electoral reform is judiciary reform.
- This report provides a degree of insight into the political landscape preceding the 2005 elections in Lebanon. It offers a summary of the current electoral

² "Cedar Revolution" has become the Western media's most commonly used name for the chain of demonstrations and popular civic action in Lebanon (mainly Beirut). It was triggered by the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri on February 14, 2005. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cedar_Revolution

system, particularly in the area of electoral administration, and potential areas of reform.

2. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. The Electoral System in Lebanon

The electoral system used in Lebanon is based on the provisions of the Ta'if Accord which established the conditions to end the civil war in Lebanon in 1989. According to the Ta'if Accord, Parliament was to be composed of 108 seats. The number was raised to 128 seats in 1992. Seats are to be divided equally between Muslims and Christians, and proportionately between the denominations of each sect. The current division is as follows:

Muslim Sects	Number of Seats	Christian Sects	Number of Seats
Sunnis	27	Maronite Catholics	34
Shiites	27	Greek Orthodox	14
Druzes	8	Greek Catholic	8
Alawites	2	Armenian Orthodox	5
		Armenian Catholic	1
		Evangelic Protestant	1
		Other Christian Groups	1
Total Muslims	64	Total Christians	64

The Accord stipulates that parliamentary elections will be held on the basis of the governorates, or administrative divisions, referred to as *muhafazat*. It also calls for a revision of the administrative divisions of the country including the *muhafazats*. This revision, to date, has not been done. A different set of electoral districts was devised for each of the three elections governed by the Ta'if Accord (in 1992, 1996, and 2000). None of these correspond perfectly to the *muhafazat* boundaries.

Under Syrian influence, the electoral districts were completely redrawn for the 2000 elections. After a series of negotiations, Lebanon was divided into 14 electoral districts; each created using the *qadas* (a smaller administrative division) as building blocks. None of these divisions followed *muhafazat* boundaries precisely. After considering several options, the same 14 electoral districts and seat allocation used in 2000 were used for the 2005 parliamentary elections.

2.2. Candidates and Lists

Each voter can vote for one candidate per seat in her/his electoral district, regardless of the voter's religious affiliation. For instance, the electoral district of Baalbek/Hermel has been assigned 10 seats, as follows: 6 Shiite, 2 Sunni, 1 Maronite, and 1 Greek Catholic. Regardless of sect, each voter votes for 6 Shiite candidates, 2 Sunni candidates, 1 Maronite candidate and 1 Greek Catholic candidate.

Voters vote for candidates, not political parties. Only candidates are registered to participate in the elections, not political parties. It is important to note that lists compiled by political groups are not official and are not registered with the Ministry of the Interior.

The law requires a deposit of 10 million Lebanese Pounds (about U.S. \$7,000). This deposit is returned only if the candidate is elected or gains at least 10% of the vote. This is seen as a heavy burden favoring wealthy candidates and groups. Legal consideration may be given to reduce the deposit to 1 million Lebanese Pounds or less, but retain other conditions such as the return of the deposit.

2.3. Ballot Paper

There is no legal provision for an official ballot paper. Voters can write the names of the candidates they choose on a piece of paper and deposit it in an envelope, which is then deposited in the ballot box. The piece of paper with the names of the selected candidates can be pre-prepared and brought to the polling station by the voter. The voter also has the option of writing down names on a blank piece of paper behind the voting screen.

The nature of the electoral system encourages candidates to form alliances and present "lists" to voters. Typically, lists are printed by the different groups on pieces of paper and then given to voters to use when voting. Most voters choose to vote using the lists provided. Although voters are able to scratch out names from the lists given to them and/or add other names, few voters choose to do this given that lists are usually designed and printed to prevent this practice.

2.4. Secular System Versus a Confessional System

The present system recognizes the deeply ingrained tradition of confessional communities (the role of religion in political allegiances). The Ta'if Accord envisaged a move away from the confessional base. To soften this change, the Accord proposed a stepping stone: a Senate with members representing religions and sects. This is found in the Constitution:

Article 22: With the election of the first Parliament on a national, non-confessional basis, a Senate is established in which all the religious communities are represented. Its authority is limited to major national issues.

A number of details, such as the means of choosing Senate members and its jurisdiction, are not stipulated in the accord. However, if implemented, this section of Ta'if could be a means to move from a confessional Parliament to a mixed formula.

2.5. Political Parties and Political Finance

There is no law specifically regulating political parties, but they must register under the 1909 Law of Associations. This is the same law under which all non-profits or associations register. The law regulates legal status, identification and legal liability, but it has no bearing on the political function of political parties.

There are no limits regarding campaign finance contributions or expenditures specified by law. Political finance regulations usually address aspects such as:

- the role of financial and in-kind contributions, political expenses, and reasonable limits on each;
- balancing full transparency of political accounts with security and privacy issues;
- reporting and disclosure of political party and campaign finance accounts;

- ineffective and biased enforcement by authorities; and
- abuse of state resources in campaigns.

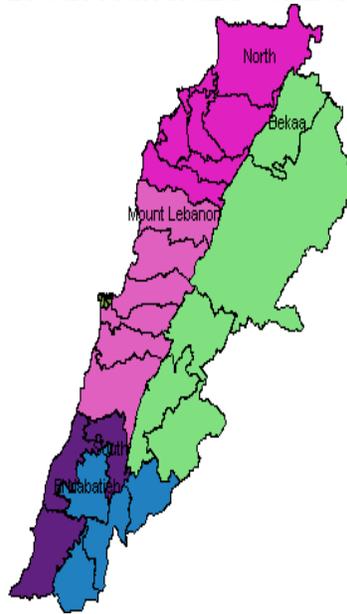
The possibility of influencing voters through illegal and diverse means increases in the absence of legal stipulations. Thus, vote buying and selling becomes increasingly harder to counteract.

3. ELECTORAL DISTRICT DELIMITATION

One of the most contentious issues in the electoral system is the way electoral districts are delimited. This section explores the ways electoral district boundaries are drawn, and the implications thereof for the political process.

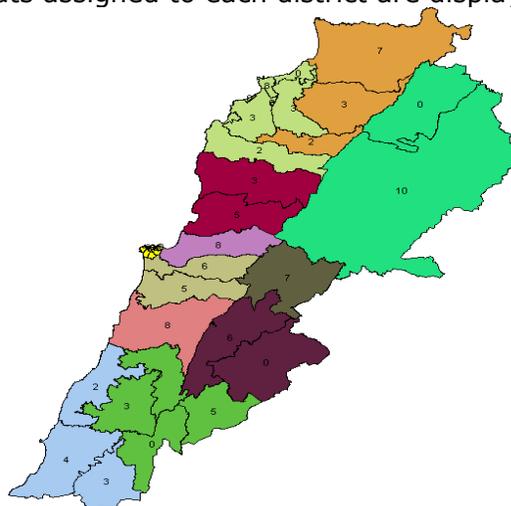
The six administrative districts (*muhafazat*) in Lebanon are as follows: North Lebanon, Beirut, Mount Lebanon, Beqaa, Nabatiyya and South Lebanon. The map below shows these six muhafazat (as well as the boundaries of the *qadas* that make up each *muhafazat*):

Map 1: Six Muhafazat of Lebanon



Map 2: Electoral Districts, Qadas and Seat Assignments for each Qada, 2000 Parliamentary Elections

The 14 electoral districts, the boundaries of the *qadas* that make up each district, and the number of seats assigned to each district are displayed in the following map:



3.1. Implications of Using the 2000 Electoral Districts for the 2005 Elections

The decision to employ the 2000 electoral districts for the parliamentary election has important ramifications for both sectarian representation and for equality of representation across districts. Although the impact on sectarian representation has been the more debated topic, the fact that these districts are considerably malapportioned should not be neglected.³

The voter registration list indicates that less than half -- in fact, only slightly over 40 percent -- of the Lebanese population is Christian.⁴ Given recent demographic trends, it is likely that an updated voter registration list would identify an even higher percentage of the voting population as Muslim. Despite this, half of the parliamentary seats in Lebanon have been reserved for Christians. If seats in parliament were allocated on the basis of the population percentages alone, Christian sects would clearly be allotted less than half of the seats. The table below specifies the number of seats each religious sect would be allocated on the basis of population alone -- if the highest remainder method of seat allocation were employed to apportion parliamentary seats.⁵

3.1.1. Parliamentary Seat Allocation by Religious Sect Table

Religious Sects	Population (Total Number of Voters)	Representation Quota	Number of Seats Allocated Using Highest Remainder Method of Apportionment	Number of Seats Allocated Currently
Sunnis	808692	37.83	38	27
Shiites	631173	29.53	29	27
Druzes	101645	4.76	5	8
Alawites	35606	1.67	2	2
<i>Muslim Subtotal</i>	<i>1577116</i>		<i>74</i>	<i>64</i>
Maronites	620933	29.05	29	34
Greek Orthodox	238515	11.16	11	14
Greek Catholic	137140	6.42	6	8
Armenian Orthodox	91447	4.28	4	5
Armenian Catholic	19315	0.90	1	1
Evangelic Christian	17615	0.82	1	1
Others	34105	1.60	2	1
<i>Christian Subtotal</i>	<i>1159070</i>		<i>54</i>	<i>64</i>
TOTAL	2736186		128	128
Population Quota	21376			

³ Malapportioned electoral districts are districts in which the population varies substantially, so much so that equality of representation is in jeopardy.

⁴ All of the voter registration statistics (including the population data by religious sect) that follow are based on the voter registration list supplied to IFES by Statistics Lebanon, a private consulting firm in Beirut.

⁵To calculate the number of seats allocated to each electoral district using the highest remainder method of apportionment, a population quota is derived by dividing the total population (in this case, the total number of registered voters) by the number of seats to be allocated. The population of each electoral district is then divided by this population quota to produce a representation quotient for each district. Each district is initially allocated the whole number of seats in its representation quotient. Then the fractional remainders of the representation quotients are ranked in order from largest to smallest. Seats are assigned in rank order of these remainders until all 128 seats are allocated. (The highest remainder method is commonly used to apportion legislative seats – this method was, for example, the approach used to apportion seats to the US Congress from 1851 until 1905.)

As the above table demonstrates, Muslims are allocated 10 fewer seats than their numbers alone would proportionally merit, and Sunni Muslims are especially under-represented. The Druze, on the other hand, are over-represented in Parliament relative to their proportion in the population. Christians, and especially Maronite and Greek Orthodox Christians, on the other hand enjoy greater representation in Parliament than their population percentages alone would grant them.

Nonetheless, these numbers do not tell the whole story. In fact, Parliamentary seats have been drawn in such a way as to ensure that well over half of the electoral districts are controlled by Muslim voters even if half of the Members of Parliament (MPs) are required to be Christian: in 10 of the 14 electoral districts (slightly over 71 percent of the electoral districts), Muslim voters are a majority of the electorate and therefore control who is elected to Parliament. The table below outlines the religious composition of each electoral district, as well as the *qadas* that make up each of the electoral districts.

3.1.2. Religious Composition of the Qadas and Electoral Districts Table

Electoral Districts	Muslim Voters	Christian Voters	TOTAL VOTERS	Percent Muslim	Percent Christian	Religious Composition of Electoral District
Achra	7531	44896	52427	14.4	85.6	
Mazraa	67272	6315	73587	91.4	8.6	
Saifi	439	9181	9620	4.6	95.4	
Beirut 1	75242	60392	135634	55.5	44.5	Majority Muslim
Bashoura	38453	6571	45024	85.4	14.6	
Msaitbeh	47101	14213	61314	76.8	23.2	
Rmeil	227	28925	29152	0.8	99.2	
Beirut 2	85781	49709	135490	63.3	36.7	Majority Muslim
Ain al-Mraisseh	8200	2347	10547	77.7	22.3	
Medawar	4825	36349	41174	11.7	88.3	
Mina al-Hosn	3204	10323	13527	23.7	76.3	
Port	6789	1841	8630	78.7	21.3	
Ras Beirut	19758	10062	29820	66.3	33.7	
Zoqaq al_Blat	38575	4622	43197	89.3	10.7	
Beirut 3	81351	65544	146895	55.4	44.6	Majority Muslim
Baalbek	47648	4733	52381	91.0	9.0	
Hermel	33364	618	33982	98.2	1.8	
Bekaa 1	81012	5351	86363	93.8	6.2	Majority Muslim
Bekaa 2	48184	83977	132161	36.5	63.5	Majority Christian
Rashaya	25865	9560	35425	73.0	27.0	
West Bekaa	48559	19261	67820	71.6	28.4	
Bekaa 3	74424	28821	103245	72.1	27.9	Majority Muslim
Jbeil	13995	51967	65962	21.2	78.8	
Kesrouan	1565	77860	79425	2.0	98.0	
Mt Lebanon 1	15560	129827	145387	10.7	89.3	Majority Christian
Mt Lebanon 2	9496	136110	145606	6.5	93.5	Majority Christian

	0	0				
Aley	7065	46603	53668	13.2	86.8	
Baabda	59597	78790	138387	43.1	56.9	
Mt Lebanon 3	66662	125393	192055	34.7	65.3	Majority Christian
Mt Lebanon 4	92673	61315	153988	60.2	39.8	Majority Muslim
Akkar	113534	61452	174986	64.9	35.1	
Bsharreh	84	42109	42193	0.2	99.8	
Dinnieh	63737	11715	75452	84.5	15.5	
North Lebanon 1	177355	115276	292631	60.6	39.4	Majority Muslim
Batroun	3461	51767	55228	6.3	93.7	
Koura	7236	45602	52838	13.7	86.3	
Minieh	0	0	0	0	0	
Tripoli	254989	32299	287288	88.8	11.2	
Zghorta	6431	56276	62707	10.3	89.7	
North Lebanon 2	272117	185944	458061	59.4	40.6	Majority Muslim
Bint Jbeil	83670	11879	95549	87.6	12.4	
Sidon	97913	23619	121532	80.6	19.4	
Tyre	115855	10793	126648	91.5	8.5	
Zahrani	0	0	0			
South Lebanon 1	297438	46291	343729	86.5	13.5	Majority Muslim
Hasbaya	30626	7165	37791	81.0	19.0	
Jezzin	10620	38740	49360	21.5	78.5	
Marjeyoun	65200	14577	79777	81.7	18.3	
Nabatieh	93375	4638	98013	95.3	4.7	
South Lebanon 2	199821	65120	264941	75.4	24.6	Majority Muslim

There are at least two important points worth noting that emerge from an examination of the above table:

- 1) Muslims compose a majority of the voters in 10 of the 14 electoral districts; and
- 2) A number of majority-Christian *qadas* (10 of the 16 majority-Christian *qadas*) have been submerged into Muslim electoral districts. (The *qadas* that have been shaded yellow in the above table are majority Christian *qadas* that have been combined with Muslim *qadas* so that the Christian voters are submerged in majority Muslim electoral districts.) For example, in North Lebanon, the almost exclusively Maronite Christian *qada* of Bsharreh, was combined with the Sunni Muslim-majority *qadas* of Akkar and Dinnieh -- despite the fact that the electoral district created was less than compact -- to produce an electoral district that is now over 60 percent Muslim.

As a result of this system, well over half of the Christians elected to Parliament are elected from majority Muslim districts. The table below indicates the percentages of Muslims and Christians in each electoral district, as well as the number of Muslim and Christian seats elected from each of these districts.

3.1.3. Religious Composition of Electoral Districts and the Number of Muslim and Christian Seats Elected from Each District Table

Electoral Districts	Muslim Voters	Christian Voters	TOTAL VOTERS	Percent Muslim	Percent Christian	Muslim Seats	Christian Seats
Beirut 1	75242	60392	135634	55.5	44.5	2	4
Beirut 2	85781	49709	135490	63.3	36.7	3	3
Beirut 3	81351	65544	146895	55.4	44.6	4	3
Bekaa 1	81012	5351	86363	93.8	6.2	8	2
Bekaa 2	48184	83977	132161	36.5	63.5	2	5
Bekaa 3	74424	28821	103245	72.1	27.9	4	2
Mt Lebanon 1	15560	129827	145387	10.7	89.3	1	7
Mt Lebanon 2	9496	136110	145606	6.5	93.5	0	8
Mt Lebanon 3	66662	125393	192055	34.7	65.3	5	6
Mt Lebanon 4	92673	61315	153988	60.2	39.8	4	4
North Lebanon 1	177355	115276	292631	60.6	39.4	6	5
North Lebanon 2	272117	185944	458061	59.4	40.6	7	10
South Lebanon 1	297438	46291	343729	86.5	13.5	11	1
South Lebanon 2	199821	65120	264941	75.4	24.6	7	4
TOTAL	1577116	1159070	2736186	57.6	42.4	64	64
Muslims elected from majority Christian districts						8	12.5%
Christians elected from majority Muslim districts						38	59.4%

As this table shows, the majority of Christians (59.4 percent) serving in parliament are elected from districts that are majority Muslim in composition. However, only slightly over 12 percent of all Muslim MPs are elected from majority Christian electoral districts.

In conclusion, although the percentage of Christians serving in parliament is higher than the percentage of Christians in the voting population, the majority of these Christians are actually elected from districts in which Muslim voters predominate. This means that Muslim voters are actually choosing many of the Christian MPs.⁶

⁶ According to a statement issued by the Maronite Bishops Council of Lebanon: " Christian MPs who are elected by Muslim blocs cannot represent Christian voters, but rather the Muslim leaders on whose lists they were elected; and they are forced to adopt their stands, not those of their Christian voters in their district." *Maronite Bishops in Lebanon Oppose New Electoral Law as a Threat to Christian-Muslim Relations*, *Christian Today*, May 13, 2005.

Using the 2000 electoral districts for the 2005 parliamentary elections also had an important effect on equality of representation. The number of seats allocated to each electoral district does not necessarily relate to the relative populations of these electoral districts. In fact, in many instances districts are granted fewer seats than their numbers merit, while other districts have more.

The table below shows the number of seats to which each electoral district would be entitled based on population, as well as the actual number of seats.

3.1.4. Seat Allocation by Electoral Districts Table

Electoral Districts	Population (Total Number of Voters)	Representation Quota	Number of Seats Allocated using Highest Remainder Method of Apportionment	Number of Seats Allocated Currently
Beirut 1	135634	6.35	6	6
Beirut 2	135490	6.34	6	6
Beirut 3	146895	6.87	7	7
Bekaa 1	86363	4.04	4	10
Bekaa 2	132161	6.18	6	7
Bekaa 3	103245	4.83	5	6
Mt Lebanon 1	145387	6.80	7	8
Mt Lebanon 2	145606	6.81	7	8
Mt Lebanon 3	192055	8.98	9	11
Mt Lebanon 4	153988	7.20	7	8
North Lebanon 1	292631	13.69	14	11
North Lebanon 2	458061	21.43	22	17
South Lebanon 1	343729	16.08	16	12
South Lebanon 2	264941	12.39	12	11
TOTAL	2736186		128	128
Population Quota	21376			

An examination of the above table reveals that several districts are over-represented (especially in the Bekaa Valley) while others (particularly in North and South Lebanon) are under-represented. Only a reallocation of seats to more accurately reflect the relative populations of the electoral districts can resolve the malapportionment.

This is not a problem that is easily rectified. As long as the confessional system, with its assigned number of sectarian seats, remains in place, it will be difficult to combine *qadas* in such a manner as to produce population equality across districts. Greater equality of representation could be achieved only if seats were assigned after the districts were constructed (rather than simply adding up the seats allocated to each *qada* after the districts are drawn).

4. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION AND ELECTIONS SECURITY

By law, the Ministry of Interior runs the elections and appoints election officials and Registration Committees, which ultimately become the counting and the returning committees. These appointed committees have wide breadth of responsibility, as they administer both the electoral lists and the voter count, which are key pre-election and post-election functions. It is arguable that such government control is the greatest single threat to the fairness of an election process. Indeed, there have been wide allegations and evidence of a very selective application of the law. In addition many aspects of the election have become subject to selective enforcement of the regulations. A biased administration can sometimes be achieved through mere inactivity. The end result has been a lack of transparency and a reduction in public confidence in the fairness of the elections.

The absence of an independent electoral body to administer elections remains a central concern of IFES. While increased scrutiny by party/candidate agents and domestic and international observers provides an environment encouraging more open and transparent administration of the elections, the conduct of the polls by the Interior Ministry is still a substantial concern shared by in-country stakeholders and the international community. Generally the incumbent status and authority of the government gives it many unfair advantages over other election contenders. Government control of the entire election process is unnecessary and undesirable as it gives the sitting government the following advantages:

- initiative, timing and location of official acts;
- staffing of election committees in charge of voter registration and counting and compilation of results);
- the ability to promulgate administrative decrees;
- administration of most steps surrounding voter lists;
- the count of the votes; and
- selective enforcement of rules.

The situation in Lebanon was particularly detrimental because the committees that hold these powers were appointed before the Syrian withdrawal and might be tainted by that association.

Selective or insufficient application of rules has been alleged to occur in such areas as:

- voter registration (inclusion, deletions and changes);
- purging deceased voters;
- determination of questionable votes by government appointed committees; and
- controlling print and electronic media and political messages.

The call for an independent electoral commission remains limited to specific circles -- within civil society organizations. It is important to note that although a bill was presented to establish such a body, it was not debated prior to the election cycle, probably because it was introduced just moments before the assassination of Rafiq Hariri.

A final and fundamental concern is whether an independent commission could really be independent if established in the current environment. In a country where there is still concern that the judiciary is not sufficiently independent, this issue must be addressed with care. A commission asserting independence, but not able to

overcome political pressure could further tarnish the credibility of institutional processes and practices in Lebanon. Therefore, it may be advisable to address the creation of a truly independent electoral management body together with issues related to the independence of the judiciary.

4.1 Extended Period for Balloting

By Prime Minister decree and according to the 2000 Election Law, elections commenced on May 29, 2005, and continued on three successive Sundays. The schedule was:

- Sunday May 29, 2005 - Beirut
- Sunday June 5, 2005 - Southern Lebanon
- Sunday June 12, 2005 - Bekaa and Mount Lebanon
- Sunday June 19, 2005 - Northern Lebanon

The explanation most often given for not having a single day for polling is security (specifically not having enough security forces to protect all polling stations). Another explanation is that Lebanon does not have enough trained electoral staff to manage the election in a single day, nor the capacity to train additional staff. However holding the elections on one day has many advantages with regard to election security, cost and the integrity of the process. Technically speaking, a better option would be to consolidate the polls into one day. Much larger countries with a more complicated topography and access conditions hold elections in one day.

Some countries require extended periods of voting due to severe geographic or demographic complications, but even in such cases polling normally occurs on consecutive days. Moreover, such extended voting raises the challenge of protecting partial results so that voters are not influenced by partial results on subsequent election dates. With regard to training polling officials in adequate numbers to allow for voting in one day, this is a normal practice for most countries and would likely be considered an asset in terms of institutional strengthening of the election processes in Lebanon.

4.2 Voter Registration

4.2.1 Registering Voters in Lebanon

The directorate general of personal status in the Ministry of the Interior is responsible for maintaining voters' lists. This directorate is responsible for registering births, marriages and deaths and keeps all human statistics for the state, hence in practical terms -- a Civil Registry. Key points regarding the maintenance of this system are summarized below.

- Voters' lists are revised annually.
- Voters must register in the electoral district where their family is registered in the civil registry (or their "*place of origin*"). In practice this means that many people are registered to vote in locations where they do not reside.
- A Registration Committee is constituted in each electoral district. The committee is composed of a judge that presides over the committee, a member of the municipal council and an employee of the Directorate General of Personal Status. These officials are appointed by decree

issued on the recommendation of the Minister of Justice and the Minister of the interior.

- The technical division of the Directorate General of Personal Status revises the lists according to additions and deletions made during the year. Persons deleted include persons with criminal convictions, people over 100 (unless they provide proof of life), people who are declared bankrupt or are admitted to mental asylums.
- The technical department of the Directorate then examines and scrubs the voters' lists.
- Copies of the lists are sent to municipalities, mayors, polling stations and the police. These lists are published in the mass media. Voters' lists can be purchased by the public. Political groups generally do purchase the lists, and use them to help voters ascertain whether they are accounted for.
- Applications can be made to add or delete names from these lists. Applications go to the Registration Committees, who study the request, rule on the application and send copies of their decisions to the concerned persons and the Directorate General of Personal Status.
- In each electoral district a high Registration Committee is constituted. This committee considers appeals against decisions of the Registration Committee.
- The Directorate General of Personal Status submits the final signed copies of the electoral lists to the Minister of Justice. A specialized Registration Committee can still make changes to the list after that period.
- The Minister of Justice sends the final copies of the lists to the Minister of the Interior to use during the elections.

4.2.2 Voters' Cards

- Each voter is issued a voter card, free of charge.
- Voters apply for voter cards at police stations. The police stations forward the applications to the Ministry of Interior. There they are processed and voter cards are produced.
- Voter cards are sent back to the police stations, where voters can pick up their cards. Or, (as practice dictates) the public can go to the local *mukhtar* (mayor) who will aggregate applications, deliver it to police stations and deliver the voter card to the voters.
- The cards contain the following fields: family name, name, father's name, sect, date of birth, confession and photo.
- Voter cards are issued one week before any election.

4.2.3 Contentious Issues Regarding Voters' Lists

- As stated above, voters must register and vote in districts where their families are registered. In practice, this means that people may live in one place, but must vote in a different place, which may be far from where they reside.
- Although it is technically possible for voters to change their place of registration, it is reportedly extremely difficult to complete the established steps. It is also a highly contentious political issue, since enabling voters to change the place of registration may disturb the confessional make up of the voting system.
- Voters have to register their confession when registering to vote. In fact, religious confession is a field in the "mother" database from which the voters' lists and cards are extracted.
- The requirement to vote in the family home district appears at first to be an unreasonable limitation on mobility and democratic rights. However this is not the view of most Lebanese citizens. Tradition dictates that citizens should vote in the place of their family's provenance. This tradition should be recognized and respected, but consideration could be given to allowing the voter to choose his/her voting location, hence establishing a connection between representation and residence.
- It is not clear how accurate the voters' lists are. From observer reports it seems there are few instances of voters not being included on the voters' lists. However, it is unclear how many people are included on the list, but should not be there (e.g. people who died or people who are not Lebanese). It is also unclear how many duplicates exist (e.g. married women who are registered both with their families of birth and their husbands' families). Some estimate these inaccuracies may be as high as 25 percent. If this is the case, it may make it possible for people to vote "in place of" voters who do not really exist. It also has a significant effect on turnout figures.
- The security of voter registration cards is a concern since they are easily forged, and there are allegations that voter cards are obtained and used to vote fraudulently. The photograph is pasted but not stamped or embossed, so it can easily be replaced. Also, the card is punched each time after voting, but it is not marked for a specific election. Therefore, punching the card does not prevent double voting.
- The processing of the applications by the police in some cases is seen as problematic.
- Reportedly, voter cards are picked up and distributed by party agents, sometimes the promise for a vote. This is a clear violation of Article 67 of the Electoral Law.

4.3 Polling Day and Preparations

Elections in Lebanon are conducted according to a well-established set of procedures and by well-trained and often experienced poll workers. The procedures include commendable security-enhancing characteristics. There are, however, some areas of

concern. This section presents both the adequate and the disconcerting aspects of these procedures. It should be emphasized that this assessment is based on interviews with polling officials, party agents and officials of the Ministry of the Interior, and not on actual observation of the elections.

4.3.1 Responsibility for Management of the Elections

The Director General of the Ministry of the Interior is responsible for conducting the elections. Some functions, specifically related to the production of voters' lists and the verification of the count are shared with the Ministry of Justice. Polling officials are appointed by the Ministry of the Interior in collaboration with the governors of the different *muhafazat*. Registration Committees, with extensive oversight over the production of the voters' list and publication of the results, are appointed by the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of the Interior.

4.3.2 Selection of Polling Locations

Polling locations, mostly schools, are selected by the Administration of the *Muhafazat*, under the direction of the Ministry of the Interior. The Electoral Law stipulates the selection of polling locations based on certain conditions:

- 1) all voters must have access to a polling location (each village of 100 voters must have at least one polling station);
- 2) polling locations must not be overcrowded (no more than 600 voters per polling station – normally classrooms); and
- 3) there can be no more than 16 polling stations per polling center (normally schools).⁷

4.3.3 Allocation of Voters to Polling Stations

- The location of polling stations and the allocation of voters to polling stations are made known through Ministry of Interior publications. These publications are available for purchase at newsstands.
- In addition, the voters' list, which includes the allocation of voters to polling stations, can be purchased in both paper and electronic formats. As stated previously, candidates readily purchase the lists and use them to make sure that voters are informed of their polling locations. Political groups also purchase the lists to check for accuracy and completeness. While sources continue to allege that the voter lists have a significant level of inaccuracy, these measures contribute to more credible voters' lists.

4.3.4 Selection and Training of Poll Workers

Every polling station in Lebanon is staffed by one Presiding Officer (or "President") and one or more clerks. These officials, who are appointed by the Governor of the *muhafazat*, must be government employees and are normally teachers. This is problematic, since it may give the government control over the application of electoral procedures. Some guidelines are:

⁷ Indications from observer reports are that these provisions were generally followed.

- No person is allowed to be an official in the area where they vote.
- Polling officials are compensated for their expenses (a fixed amount of \$200).
- All officials are encouraged to attend training sessions, and all are encouraged to read a detailed training manual produced by the Ministry of the Interior.

4.3.5 Candidate Representatives

All candidates are allowed to have a representative in every polling station in the district where they are running for office. In addition, every candidate is allowed to have one roaming representative for every five polling stations. This is a commendable measure that has increased the transparency of the elections.

Although the law stipulates that the Presiding Officer cannot prevent the candidate representatives from observing the elections, the Presiding Officer has the right to expel candidate representatives from polling locations for "causing disorder," a power that can be selectively applied.

4.3.6 Election Material

The day before polling, the Presiding Officer receives a kit with all the materials required for a particular Election Day. This kit includes:

- A metal ballot box;
- Two locks (for sealing the ballot box during voting);
- The voters' list;
- Envelopes (used by voters for their "ballot papers");
- The voting screen;
- A video camera and television screen (used during counting – see below);
- Several forms (a report form used to record events of the day, a count tabulation form, a results form and a checklist to ensure that all tasks have been completed);
- Blank pieces of white paper (available for voters to write the names of the candidates they will vote for); and
- An envelope with wax (to be used to return the results and reports after polling and counting).

The material generally seems to be of a good standard. Based on a cursory inspection, the election forms used for reporting and tabulation of results seemed to be well designed and user friendly. It has been alleged that the voting screens may be insufficient. This could not be corroborated.

4.3.7 Procedures in the Polling Station

Polling procedures are stipulated in detail in the Electoral Law (specifically Articles 39 through 62). For the purposes of this report, the most important details of the procedures are as follows:

- Before polling begins the Presiding Officer ensures that the number of envelopes for ballots is equal to the number of voters on the voters' register.

- The voters' register is placed in such a way that the candidate representatives and observers can inspect it.
- The open, empty ballot box is shown to agents before it is sealed with two locks (one key to be retained by the Presiding Officer and the other by one of the candidate representatives, usually the eldest).
- The voter enters the polling station, presents the voting card to the Presiding Officer, who normally reads out the name of the voter aloud for all to hear. The Presiding Officer, the Clerk and one of the representatives all sign in front of the voter next to the voter's name.
- The voter receives an envelope and goes behind the voting screen, where he or she places the list containing the names of candidates in the envelope. The voter then seals the envelope. The Presiding Officer must ensure that the voter is alone behind the voting screen.
- The voter then puts the sealed envelope containing the list in the ballot box. (Handicapped voters may be assisted by another voter of her/his choice.)
- The voter then certifies that she/he has voted by signing or putting a fingerprint next to her/his name on the voters' list.

4.3.8 Potential Problems Regarding the Polling Procedures

If applied, the procedures outlined above may seem adequate to ensure voting secrecy. One should, however, look above at how the lists are put together and presented as "ballots" to voters to better appraise the adequacy of the procedures to ensure voting secrecy.

Reportedly, candidates find ingenious ways of determining who voted for them and who did not. For instance, they might prepare different lists with the names of candidates written in a different order. They then might carefully record which voters received which lists to determine whether or not a specific voter used the provided list.

Therefore, the lack of an official ballot paper and the practice of using lists prepared by candidates creates the conditions for a serious breach of voting secrecy.

4.3.9 Counting and Tallying the Results

Once the last voter has voted, the ballot box is opened in the presence of the candidate representatives and observers. The Presiding Officer counts all envelopes, and reconciles the number against the number of voters who voted, as recorded on the voters' list.

Each envelope is then opened individually, and the ballot paper is placed under the video camera and projected onto the TV screen, so that all present can see it. The Presiding Officer then reads aloud the votes contained on the paper. All present should agree on each vote. The clerk then records the vote on the tabulation sheet. This process continues until every envelope is opened and every vote counted.

Ballots are considered invalid if they include marks, offensive comments, or any script other than Arabic. If a ballot contains more names than the number of seats

allocated, the names at the top of the list are counted first. Ballots deemed invalid are attached to a report form and sent with the results to the Registration Committees. A judge decides whether these votes will be counted or not.

Once all votes are counted and certified, the Presiding Officer announces the result to all present in the polling station. The Presiding Officer then completes the results form. A copy of the results, signed by the Presiding Officer, is placed outside the polling station, and each candidate representative receives a copy of the results. This is a commendable practice which helps ensure that results are not tampered with during transit from the polling station to the final tallying station. Once the process is complete, all the ballot papers and envelopes are burned. Although not unique to Lebanon, this practice makes it impossible to recount or verify the result of any polling station.

The Presiding Officer completes a report of the day's proceedings. This report is signed by the Presiding Officer, the Clerk, and all the representatives present and placed, with a copy of the results, in an envelope and sealed with wax. These envelopes are handed to the Registration Committees. These committees tally and then announce the results of the electoral district for all the candidates. They then hand the results to the Governor. The Governor, in turn, transmits the results to the Ministry of the Interior.

5. PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSION

5.1 Voter Education

Based on potential electoral reforms it should be noted that should there be any significant changes in the election law or procedures, a voter information campaign will be required to inform the Lebanese electorate of those changes and their impact on the Lebanese electoral system. Although campaigns of this nature normally follow under the election management body's (EMB) mandate, civil society other diverse interest groups and even political parties take on some of this responsibility.

5.2 Domestic and International Observation

The Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE) has observed elections in Lebanon since 1996. For the 2005 process they led a coalition of civil society organizations that included students and academics, journalists, human rights, conflict resolution and other interest groups. It recruited 150 observers and produced an observation report based on field observation in June 2005. For the 2005 process, the European Union provided an international expert to support the domestic observation training.

It is important to highlight that, although encouraging, in principle the number of observers is not as important as their capacity, neutrality, and ability to deploy strategically and devise appropriate means to collect and process timely and accurate field data for objective analysis. A systematic approach to electoral observation requires appropriate tools when working with such a large and diverse group of volunteers whose level of education and interests varies significantly. In general, domestic observation has benefited from effective exchanges with observer groups from other countries. Appropriate technical support when made available, has also helped to improve the analyses conducted using the data gathered by national observers.

Lebanon allowed for international monitoring during the 2005 electoral process. In total, the European Commission deployed nearly 90 observers: A core team of

elections experts was based in Beirut. 24 long-term observers were deployed to the provinces to monitor pre-electoral preparations, campaigning, voting and the post-election period. About 50 short-term observers arrived near the first Election Day. They observed polling and counting on all four election days.

The mission's aim was to assess the whole election process, including the legal framework, the political environment, campaigns, electoral preparations, voting and counting as well as the post-election period. The mission issued a preliminary statement shortly after the elections and a final report detailing their findings. The report offers recommendations for possible improvements. It can be found at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/human_rights/eu_election_ass_observ/lebanon/

5.3 Access of Political Actors to the Media and Media Monitoring

Access to media is acknowledged as a major issue which needs to be legislatively addressed. Article 68 of the Electoral Law, which forbids campaigning in the media, has been selectively applied during past elections. This has meant certain players with direct or indirect ownership of media houses are favored over those with no access to media. Since almost every Lebanese media outlet (print or electronic) cover news with a clear bias towards their ownership's political alignment, this situation is particularly problematic.

The issue of media access was widely discussed, but has not been addressed in terms of putting in place regulations that can be enforced. Unfortunately, there are no signs of political will to enforce such regulations equitably. Amendments proposed or discussed in the past indicated an intention to stiffen the penalties and the length of the period of the prohibition. Yet, there was no significant discussion among political circles of equitable access or monitoring to equitably enforce the law and ensure access.

During election periods, it is not uncommon for media houses to agree to abide by a code of conduct to facilitate an open and fair environment for voter information. Self-restraint and moderation by the different media outlets is often preferable to a highly regulated or restricted environment. The Ministry of Information promoted the adoption of such a code of conduct. This was deemed constructive and valuable and was therefore supported by the United Nations (U.N.) and the international community generally⁸.

Media monitoring is needed to ascertain adherence to the code. Such monitoring is commonly conducted by NGOs, observers and even the election management body or government agencies responsible for enforcement of media regulations. Reports and statistics about the fairness of campaign coverage should be made available to media houses and to the public. This way voters can better measure biased or unfair reporting. With U.N. and IFES support, a media monitoring unit operated from May to June 2005 and reports were made available to the public and international observers.

5.4 Out-of-Country Voting

Lebanon has a Diaspora estimated to be at least double the size of the country's population. Out-of-country voting is controversial at best because some claim it would mainly benefit a particular sect. More research is needed on this issue given

⁸ IFES provided direct assistance to this effort.

that, based on the sources available to date there are no accurate, documented figures to support claims one way or another.

A potential need for technical support would be to assist the development of tools to measure and establish the location and composition of the Lebanese Diaspora. This would allow discussions regarding voter eligibility, citizenship and the political implications of out-of-country voting to be based on acceptable data.

Some sources continue to state that the confessional composition of Lebanese nationals overseas (registered or not) significantly differs from the country's confessional make-up. Out-of-country voting could become highly charged based on the existing perceptions that certain confessions would benefit -- some more than others.

5.5 Exclusion of Military from Voting

The law excludes the military from voting, but has been applied inconsistently. New circumstances following the departure of Syrian troops may not warrant a blanket exclusion of the military from voting. They are perceived almost as a separate force in the state outside the civilian world. Continued exclusion could marginalize the military and exclude them from normal life. The military are properly established to protect civilians. This should not place them outside society. They should be eventually made to feel a part of the society they protect.

6 POLITICAL COMPETITION

6.1 Historical Background to the Elections

Lebanon's fourth parliamentary elections since the end of the civil war came at a time when political life is only beginning to come to terms with the fundamental changes brought about by Syria's swift withdrawal. The formation of a caretaker government under the premiership of Najib Miqati lent some equilibrium to the political situation and allowed for elections to be held on time by the end of May 2005. Strong differences persisted over the election law, but the law of 2000 was nevertheless retained, and the political players in Lebanon accepted administration of elections based on this Law. This section of the report reviews the key players, including political parties, non-aligned groups, individuals who participated in the process, their electoral strategies and alliances, and some of the issues which served to unite and divide the Lebanese political landscape just prior to the electoral process.

6.2 The Syrian Retreat

The last of the Syrian troops left the country on April 26, 2005. Their absence was felt at all levels of society. In the political sphere, three effects were particularly salient:

- 1) The culture of fear and intimidation faded fast. The heads of the Lebanese security apparatus were finally replaced giving way to a more open debate. However, it also opened up conflicts repressed by the Syrian presence, notably contentions over the right of Hizbollah to bear arms and their responsibility for civil war crimes. In particular, General Aoun's return and the amnesty law of 1991 was reconsidered after 45 Members of Parliament expressed support for amending the law to allow the release of Christian leader Samir Gea'gea'. However, Speaker of the Parliament Nabih Berri

refused to call a parliamentary session to consider the issue. He was, therefore, not freed before the elections. Another resurfacing issue was the plight of Lebanese prisoners in Syrian prisons, which triggered large demonstrations in front of the Parliament.

- 2) Most importantly, the Syrian loyalists, until recently known as the "Ain at-Tineh Group," were mostly on the defensive through the period that followed Hariri's assassination. As a result, this coalition nearly fell apart. The nature of the relevant alliances which followed depended to a large extent on the electoral law and how it defined the electoral districts.
- 3) Despite Jumblatt's shrugging off loyalist attempts to stir up the balance of the opposition, it was indeed shaken considerably by disagreement over how to run the elections. These disagreements run deep and became more apparent as opposition members found themselves in direct competition over limited spots on electoral lists.

6.3 The Opposition

The killing of Hariri considerably expanded the anti-Syrian opposition to include most of the Sunni, Druze and Christian leadership. Despite the fractures in what was until April 2005 called the "Bristol gathering," plans proved successful for the opposition to run on joint lists⁹. The backbone of the opposition was a coalition of the late Rafiq Hariri's bloc, led by his son Saadeddin Hariri, a 35-year-old businessman. The coalition included the Christian Qornet Shahwan (QS) grouping, which joined forces with Walid Jumblatt, head of the minority Druze community and leader of the al-Hizb al-Taquadummi al-Ishtiraki, or Progressive Socialist Party¹⁰. These movements had largely overlapping political interests and they cooperated closely until their disagreement over the electoral law erupted.

6.3.1 Political Groupings in the Opposition

- **Qornet Shahwan Gathering:** This is a grouping of Christian politicians under the moral, and often also political, leadership of Maronite Patriarch Sfeir that was founded in 2001 as an attempt to unite the heavily fractured Christian community. Most of the Gathering's members are local *zu'ama* (traditional leaders) with a strong power-base in restricted areas of Mount Lebanon. The Phalange Party, Lebanese Forces and Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement were also involved in the QS, but remained over time on the fringe and became in effect forces in their own right.
- **The Free Patriotic Movement (FPM):** The FPM's -- later proven well founded -- optimism¹¹ was mainly based on the fact that General Aoun remained a steadfast opponent to Syrian presence for fifteen years, whereas most other members of the opposition worked with the Syrians until 2004. Aoun returned as an outsider on May 7, 2005 not tainted by a history of bad governance and corruption in post-war Lebanon. His calls for structural reforms, abolishment of

⁹ Tayyar al-Mustaqbal (Future Tide) coalition won 72 seats.

¹⁰ Jumblatt led a Syria-backed armed militia during the war. After the war he served as a cabinet official in several pro-Syrian Lebanese governments.

¹¹ The Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) won 21 seats.

sectarianism and the fight against corruption may therefore be taken more seriously by Lebanese citizens and helped to win him votes¹². More than twenty years of internal disagreement and disunity has contributed to a deep longing in the Christian community for a unifying leader who will represent them and act powerfully.

- **Walid Jumblatt:** After the death of Hariri, Walid Jumblatt rose to spearhead the opposition. However, his maneuvering to accommodate Hizbollah and Amal, likely was the cause of his fall out with parts of the Christian opposition.
- **The Democratic Forum:** This grouping mainly consists of Christians who have a slightly more progressive profile than the QS Gathering, but it also includes a number of highly competent Muslim politicians. Principal figures, such as Member of Parliament Nassib Lahoud, retained good relations with the Syrians and Musbah al-Ahdab, a popular liberal Sunni politician from Tripoli. Other independent Christian groups include the National bloc of Carlos Eddé.
- **The Phalange Party (Kata'ib):** The Maronite party broke in two after former President Amin Jumayil returned to Lebanon in 2002 and protested against the party's pro-Syrian line. The Jumayil family still retains a power-base in the Metn and Kisrawan districts. Their break-away contingent now appears stronger than the official Phalange Party, under the leadership of Karim Pakradouni, who has been disgraced in the Christian community by his persistent support for Syria.
- **The Lebanese Forces (LF):** The LF were banned as a movement in 1994 when their leader, Samir Gea'gea' was imprisoned. However, several local leaders with strong ties to the group ran for Parliament, directly challenging candidates from the QS. The group was largely perceived as the most hard-line Christian party. Since the assassination of Hariri, their influence, organization and indeed presence on the street has risen.
- **The National Liberal Party (NLP) (Dory Chamoun):** This is essentially a party of one family. The NLP still commands a certain following in the Maronite community and competed over a few seats in Beirut and the Metn.
- **The Democratic Left (DL):** This party was formed last year as a modern, reformed, anti-Syrian alternative to the Communist Party. It remains one of the only parties in Lebanon with no specific sectarian profile. Its leader, former head of the Communist Party Elias Atallah, secured a strong base in the student population and among liberal, non-sectarian minded Lebanese for the party. The long-term goal of the party is to abolish the sectarian system and work for a secular society. In particular, the party aimed at challenging the big Shiite parties for representation in the South,

¹² General Michel Aoun, the FPM leader, is a Maronite Christian and former military officer who led a failed coup against Syria in 1989 and served briefly as Lebanon's Prime Minister and Acting President before fleeing to France. He returned to Lebanon May 7, 2005 after 14 years in exile.

although such a challenge would likely have been more successful in smaller electoral districts. The DL initially supported smaller districts (qada) but viewed elections on time as a higher priority and therefore accepted the 2000 law.

6.4 The Loyalist Camp

The popularity of the opposition threatened to oust most independent pro-Syrian politicians. Therefore, observers expected few such candidates, other than those aligned with the electoral lists of Amal and Hizbollah in the districts of the South and the Bekaa, to be elected to Parliament. Owing to their solid base in the Shiite population, the parliamentary blocs of the two Shiite parties won 35 seats.

- **Hizbollah**

The Shiite "Party of God" commanded, prior to the elections, a bloc of 13 members in Parliament. In the last few months, Hizbollah adopted a middle way between the opposition and the more staunchly pro-Syrian groups and individuals. Although formally in the Ain at-Tineh group, the Shiite party kept lines of communication open both to Jumblatt and Sfeir. This prudent strategy, along with their sheer political weight and importance in the regional game, earned them a central position. On the popular level, they did not alienate the masses who sympathize with the legacy of Hariri. On the political level, they succeeded in gaining the protection of opposition leaders like Walid Jumblatt, who has been mustering international support for annulling the part of Resolution 1559 that calls for disarming all militias.

- **Amal**

Amal, the other large Shiite party, which was leading the now defunct Ain at-Tineh pro-Syrian coalition, found itself in a more precarious situation. Its leadership's unbreakable loyalty to Syria corresponded poorly with the mixed feelings many Shiites have towards Syria's behavior in Lebanon. Amal's leader Nabih Berri has been known for his ability to maneuver the political landscape. Although he may not be able to resume his long-time position as Speaker of the Parliament, his party will still wield considerable influence in the new Parliament.

- **The Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party (SSNP)**

The SSNP has a long history in Lebanon and its ideologically committed supporters are spread throughout the country. Its main reason for staying committed to Syria can be found in its strategic vision of the region. The party staunchly refuses to separate the Syrian and Lebanese tracks in the peace negotiations with Israel. They have therefore remained loyal to Syria despite the turn in public opinion. Even though SSNP is known for its ideological fervor, over the last 15 years it has developed into one of the most strictly clientelist groups, making it largely dependent on Syrian support.

- **The Baath Party**

The Baath Party has been left in a situation worse than that of the SSNP and is in danger of being annihilated as a political force in Lebanon. The Baath Member of Parliament for the Beqaa, Assem Qanso, has been one of the most publicly reviled figures since the death of Hariri.

6.5 Final Conclusions

The Jumblatt-Hariri-Lebanese Forces-Qornet Shahwan axis won a majority in Parliament¹³, although Michel Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement fought it all the way. The post-election debate has revolved around the meaning of Aoun's victory in the Metn and his inclusion of pro-Syrian figures such as Michel al-Murr on his list. In appointing late Rafiq Hariri's closest economic adviser Fouad Siniora as Prime Minister, the new Parliament has taken a great step toward political reform. Predictions that Aoun will be appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs point in the same direction. However, the extent to which actual change will sweep the political scene is impeded by three factors, all of which result from the complicated political dealings during and after the elections. These factors are described below:

- 1) President Lahoud looks poised to stay in his seat, which may seriously derail the dismantlement and reform of the security services;
- 2) Jumblatt's dealings with Nabih Berri and Hizbollah over the electoral law, which is widely seen to have alienated large parts of the Christian street and pushed it towards Aoun, have allowed Berri to remain Speaker of the Parliament; and
- 3) Aoun's electoral alliances secured re-election for otherwise doomed figures, adding to the pro-Syrian Shiite groups who already make up a sizeable block in Parliament.

In conclusion, figures like Jumblatt, who were driving forces in ousting Syria from Lebanon, but are also part of a political class with roots in the civil war, may become impediments to political and electoral reforms because they rely on the continuation of the present sectarian system for their political power. The question of reform goes far beyond Syria's role in Lebanon. A thorough reform of the political class, which would empower some of the new political forces whose support was decisive for the demonstrations in February and March, depends on moving the electoral law away from the list system and possibly away from sectarian representation as such.

¹³ Tayyar al-Mustaqbal (Future Tide) coalition won 72 seats.



CENTER FOR TRANSITIONAL and POST-CONFLICT GOVERNANCE

LEBANON ELECTORAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM Interim Report

Beirut, Lebanon
June 30, 2005

Background

From early April 2005 to late May 2005 IFES conducted an electoral “mapping” mission in Lebanon to enable the development of an effective follow-on electoral assistance strategy in a political environment where none had previously been provided. IFES deployed a five member team of elections and regional experts in the areas of election law, management and administration, security, representation systems design, voter education, communications and outreach, delimitation of constituency boundaries, Lebanese history, and political processes. They conducted an assessment and provided a detailed analysis of the current political situation in Lebanon.

The electoral mapping mission was followed by the current project, the Lebanon Electoral Assistance Program. IFES is providing this progress update under the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS) agreement number DGC-A-00-01-0000400-00.

At the time of this report, the IFES team is comprised of the following members, all of whom contributed to this update:

- An Election Administration and Security Specialist;
- An Election Observation Specialist;
- A Voter Education Specialist; and
- A Media Monitoring Specialist.

This interim report describes the IFES team's activities over the period of June 1 to June 29, 2005 in fulfillment of the objectives of this project. The report includes an initial assessment of areas not investigated fully during the earlier mission, specifically election

observation, media monitoring and voter education. It concludes with an assessment of the prospects for electoral reform.

In summary, during this period the IFES electoral assistance team was active in the following areas:

- Provision of technical assistance to the Lebanese government, specifically in the areas of election observation and media monitoring, under the umbrella of the United Nations Electoral Assistance Division (UNEAD);
- Identification of appropriate and targeted voter education messages in response to the changing electoral environment over the four weeks of voting;
- Collaboration with Lebanese partner organizations in the development and distribution of voter education messages; and
- Assessment of the electoral environment over the period of voting, with the aim of updating and completing the "electoral map" which was initiated by the election mapping mission in April and May 2005.

This interim report will be followed by a comprehensive assessment of the electoral process and the need for reform of the legal framework governing elections in Lebanon.

1. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

In early 2005, the Lebanese government extended requests to UNEAD to provide technical expertise, specifically in the areas of election observation and media monitoring, during the electoral process. UNEAD, in turn, requested that IFES provide specialists to assist the Ministry of the Interior in coordinating the activities of election observers. In addition, UNEAD requested that IFES provide the Ministry of Information with assistance in the area of monitoring media reporting. IFES responded to these requests by deploying an Election Observation Specialist and Media Monitoring Specialist to Lebanon. These two specialists worked in close collaboration with the UNEAD team in planning its activities in support of the two ministries.

1.1. Media Monitoring

Since deployment, the IFES Media Monitoring Specialist has focused on two strands of media related activities:

1. Assessment of national and international media monitoring efforts of the Lebanese 2005 parliamentary elections; and
2. Assessment of the Lebanese media landscape including the existing media laws and regulations.

The Media Monitoring Specialist established contacts with the various key national and international stakeholders involved in elections media monitoring (Statistics Lebanon for Internews, the European Union Election Observation Mission, the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE), and the Ministry of Information) and gathered

information to make an overall assessment of media monitoring efforts before, during and after the elections.

In particular, the specialist met with the Media Monitoring Analyst who was assisting the Ministry of Information in monitoring the media's conduct during the election process and providing technical assistance to the analyst responsible for writing the weekly and final media monitoring reports for the Minister. Advice was provided to improve the content of the final report. The expert plans to further assist in commenting on the draft final report which is expected within the coming days. To this end, the media expert was invited to the debriefing sessions of the Minister of Information with different media groups in which adherence to the self imposed 'broadcast code of ethics' was evaluated. Post election, the media monitoring expert also attended the EU Observation Mission's press briefing where the EU presented its preliminary observation report.

Media conduct (broadcast media) during the election process is regulated under Article 68 of the electoral law. Due to the nature of this regulation, under which broadcast media are not allowed to report on any political issues during the election period, the Minister of Information (in charge of media regulation) and the main Lebanese broadcasters agreed on a self-imposed code of conduct for broadcast reporting during the elections period. It was agreed that adherence to this code of conduct would be monitored by the Ministry of Information and discussed in a weekly evaluation meeting with the broadcast representatives. As indicated above, the media monitoring expert provided some assistance to this program.

IFES is still awaiting official final reports from the national and international observation efforts. However, preliminary conclusions from all organizations indicate that most media outlets behaved largely in breach of Article 68 of the electoral law and the self imposed broadcast code of conduct, including providing unequal access to the media for certain candidates, biased reporting and a breach of the pre-election silence period. On the other hand monitoring organizations also indicate that under the current electoral system -- with its complex structure of holding elections over four consecutive rounds -- it is very difficult to set up a comprehensive monitoring system. Most media monitoring organizations (i.e. EUEOM Lebanon 2005, Ministry of Information, and Statistics Lebanon) acknowledge that this complex electoral system makes it difficult for the media to grant equal access to all candidates. The specialist is currently concluding a round of meetings with the different organizations to discuss their media monitoring results, conclusions and recommendations.

1.1.1. An Initial Assessment of the Lebanese Media Landscape

To enable the Media Monitoring Specialist to conduct a thorough assessment of the various media monitoring efforts, and to complement the IFES mapping mission report with a media component, IFES has taken a closer look at the existing Lebanese media landscape and the legal framework under which it operates. The results of this exercise will be used as basis for recommendations for future projects in support of the media component within electoral reform assistance projects. Information on the media is

gathered by examining existing media related documents and materials, by meeting with a number of experts on Lebanese politics and media, including media representatives, and assessing and evaluating the elections media monitoring reports.

Most commentators agree that, in comparison to most countries in the region, Lebanon has a relatively well developed and free media. The media in all of its forms is easily accessible and widely available in three languages, Arabic, French and English. The Lebanese media features diverse opinions and lively criticism of authorities and policies.

In addition, the prevalence of satellite dishes gives Lebanese citizens access to other Arab and international television stations. Foreign print publications are also widely available. Nonetheless, many Lebanese analysts comment that self-censorship remains a problem because authorities and editors do not allow journalists to cross unstated boundaries on sensitive topics. Reportedly, state interference in media is not uncommon. All but one (Télé Liban) TV station are privately owned and strongly reflect the opinions of their financial backers who are often closely linked to various political and religious groupings.

The press in Lebanon is privately owned, and like the broadcast media, press content often reflects the opinions of financial backers. Many prominent politicians own shares in private broadcasters and publications. (A list of print and broadcast media in Lebanon can be found in Annex 1.)

Media are regulated under the media law (382/94) and a special regulation. Article 68 of the electoral law regulates media conduct during the electoral process.

A further assessment and recommendations regarding the media regulation of the electoral law will be included in the final report for this project and after the media expert has finalised several rounds of meetings with the various key media representatives and experts in the coming days.

1.2. Election Observation

The 2005 parliamentary elections in Lebanon marked the first time international observers officially observed an electoral process in Lebanon. It also marked the first time national observers were accredited to observe election activities in Lebanese polling stations. Because it was the first time electoral authorities in Lebanon had to manage international and national observers on this scale, the Ministry of Information extended a request to UNEAD to provide assistance in coordinating observer related activities. As agreed with UNEAD, IFES provided the services of an Election Observation Specialist to the Director General of the Ministry of the Interior. The specialist was available to assist the Director General with planning the accreditation of observers, providing information to observer groups, and coordinating the activities of different observer groups.

Throughout the electoral process, the election observation specialist coordinated her activities closely with UNEAD representatives. Together with the UNEAD

representatives, the specialist was in regular contact with the Director General of the Ministry of the Interior to ensure that the ministry received all the support it required. Toward this end, a UN/IFES office was established within the premises of Ministry of Interior in order to provide better assistance to the Ministry in the area of observer coordination. The team was continuously available to the Director General for advice on observer related questions.

On each of the four election days, the Election Observation Specialist, together with UNEAD and other IFES staff members, accompanied senior Ministry of Interior officials on visits to the governors responsible for implementing the elections in the various electoral districts. During these visits different issues relating to the implementation of elections in the various electoral districts, including coordination of observer activities, were discussed.

1.2.1. International Observation

Three weeks before the Lebanese parliamentary elections the government of Lebanon for the first time invited and welcomed international and national observers to participate. The parliamentary elections were held on four consecutive Sundays starting on 29 May 2005. The ministry understood that the elections needed to be conducted in accordance with existing legislation and international standards and that the presence of neutral witnesses increased the level of confidence in the electoral process among the Lebanese citizens.

As a first step, the Director General of the Ministry of the Interior, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, informed all diplomatic missions in Lebanon of their right to apply to the Ministry of the Interior for entrance into the polling stations. The majority of international observers were fielded by the European Union following an agreement between the EU and the government of Lebanon. The EU Election Observation Mission (EU EOM)¹ was deployed to Lebanon; with the core team arriving in Beirut on 11 May 2005. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which included a code of conduct for observers, was signed between the European Union and the Government of Lebanon on 14 May 2005. After meeting with the UN and IFES, the Ministry of the Interior agreed to come to similar arrangements with the other observer groups.

The Ministry of the Interior held daily coordination meetings with the EU EOM, and met with all other observer groups. The Director General also personally received the independent international observer groups and briefed them on the political situation, the electoral process and various procedures. He also met with groups from Canada (16 observers), Turkey (6 observers), Australia (4 observers), Francophone countries (14 observers), and the International Socialist Organization from Greece (2 observers).

¹ The EU EOM consisted of 116 observers led by a Chief Observer who is a Member of the European Parliament. A core team of 11 members led the mission at a central level, supported by 26 Long –Term Observers (24 from EU member states, two from Switzerland), 62 Short Term Observers (50 from EU member states, 10 from Canada and 2 from Switzerland), and four locally-recruited short-term observers from EU member state embassies in Lebanon. A delegation from the European parliament joined the EUEOM on 27 May 2005.

Before receiving official accreditation badges from the Ministry of the Interior, individual observers and members of observation groups received copies of the code of conduct (the Ministry of the Interior adopted the EU code of conduct for this purpose), the 2000 electoral law, the 2005 election guide for the presiding officer and members of the polling stations and various maps. The observers also viewed training videos of the polling process. These training videos were prepared by the Ministry of the Interior for polling staff.

The UN and IFES met with some of the above mentioned groups, including delegations from the US, Canada and Turkey, in order to ensure they had adequate information regarding the electoral system, the process and the political landscape of the country. These meetings were also used to coordinate the different observer group activities.

The Ministry of the interior indicated they responded to observer criticism by improving aspects of the electoral process during each stage of the election. Examples of improvements the Ministry claims to have initiated are:

1. addressing problems with the voting screens (the curtains used for this purpose were not always used properly);
2. improving access for disabled voters;
3. placing a Judge in the premises of the Ministry to deal with complaints; and
4. providing a quick response to voters who had a voter card but were not on the voting list.

Throughout the polling process, the Ministry of the Interior operated an information center. Center staff addressed various emergencies and provided clarifications related to the elections. This center was available to the general public, polling staff, candidate representatives and observers. The center hotline number was published in newspapers and publicized on television. According to the Director General, the information center received numerous calls. The Ministry estimates that 90% of the callers were seeking clarification on the electoral process. There were also some callers who were reporting unsubstantiated allegations of vote buying. UN and IFES supported the Ministry of the Interior by providing a continuous staff presence at the center, as well as by conducting information sessions for the international observers, as indicated above.

1.2.2. Domestic Observation

On April 25, 2005, 27 Lebanese organizations launched a coalition, led by LADE to observe the parliamentary elections. Plans of the coalition, as outlined by LADE's leaders in a press conference, were to train and deploy a large number of national observers to polling stations throughout the country.

The Ministry of the Interior accredited 150 national observers for the first round of the elections. This number was later increased following requests from various bodies (such

as EU EOM). By the final round a total of 367 national observers were officially accredited by the Ministry.

LADE established nine regional observation offices in the following cities: Baabda, Baalbek, Bekaa-ghtaura, Nabatiye, Saida, Jbail- Byblos, Tripoli and Akkar. Just prior to the election, additional offices were opened in order to gather and serve the national observers. These offices were in the following places: (Tyre, Antelias, Der Al- Amar-chouf, NDU -Notre Dame University, Usek in Kaslik, Balamand University).

Each regional office had an observation coordinator and an assistant. Both staff members were responsible for monitoring the pre-election process and coordinating observers during the election process.

Throughout the process, LADE claims to have trained approximately 1,500 national observers, even though only 367 were officially accredited. According to LADE officials, three types of observers were used to cover the election process:

- LADE local observers -- volunteers from the regions where they are registered to vote;
- Outside Observers -- volunteers from regions outside of where they are registered to vote;
- Coalition Observers -- university students and NGO representatives participating in the coalition.

In each of the regions, LADE fielded many more observers than those who were officially accredited. Accredited observers observed activities inside polling stations, while the others observed activities outside polling stations. The numbers of observers per region were as follows:

- Beirut- 450 Observers
- South- 600 Observers
- Bekaa and Mont Lebanon- 800 Observers
- North- 700 Observers

2. VOTER EDUCATION

2.1. IFES Support of Voter Education Campaigns

The month-long balloting process for the Lebanese parliamentary elections provided an opportunity to continuously assess and address changing voter education needs. One of the objectives of the Lebanon Electoral Assistance Program was to rapidly respond to the changing electoral environment and in turn address changing voter education needs. After the first round of voting, IFES met with various Lebanese and international groups, including USAID, NDI and IRI, to discuss voter education needs for the subsequent rounds of voting. Following these discussions, it was agreed that voter education

messages during the final weeks should remind voters to make an independent choice, based on the credibility of candidates, and discourage illegal practices such as vote selling and buying. The organizations also endorsed IFES support for a public awareness campaign focusing on the need to make the process accessible to disabled citizens.

IFES support enabled the Lebanese Transparency Association (LTA) to augment its election-related media campaign with three television spots emphasizing the independence of voter choice and discouraging corrupt practices, such as vote-buying. The television spots, which aired on three networks -- LBC, NewTV, and Future -- reached 98% of the country and were broadcast during the most critical point in the electoral process.

The message for the first video clip was, "It's your right to know your right." This message aimed to stress the need for voters to make informed choices. The message for the second spot was, "Hold responsible those who are responsible." The ad featured people laughing with a voiceover saying, "They laughed at you in the past. Don't let them laugh at you now." The message aimed to stress the need to hold elected officials accountable. The final spot in the series showed voters with price tags on their foreheads. It was a dramatic anti-vote selling, vote buying visualization. The spots will be used for future elections as this message will continue to be relevant.

The Lebanese Physical Handicapped Union (LPHU), in conjunction with the Youth Association of the Blind, had launched an awareness campaign, "My Rights" to inform disabled persons, targeted groups, and the general public, of the rights of disabled persons in the electoral process. The campaign generated considerable media attention and drew the attention of top government officials. It resulted in significant improvements in accessibility to polling stations and accommodation of the needs of the disabled during the second set of elections in the South. Upon instruction from the Ministry of the Interior, governors responsible for elections in the southern electoral districts cooperated with the LPHU to identify polling centers where voters with handicaps were due to vote, and ensured that those polling centers were more accessible for voters with disabilities, for instance by installing ramps to ensure wheelchair access.

IFES' support not only enabled the LPHU to continue its campaign into the final round of the elections, but allowed them to produce billboards, posters, and brochures. The brochures include guides for media, observers, and polling staff on various accessibility issues for the disabled. Materials produced by LPHU will continue to be used after the election to educate other organizations and political leaders within the country on the rights of the disabled. Materials will also be shared with organizations in the region wishing to launch similar advocacy campaigns.

2.2. An Initial Assessment of the Voter Education Environment

There was an abundance of campaign and candidate-related material available prior to and during the electoral process. However, there was very little voter information and civic education available throughout the process.

The Ministry of the Interior disseminated general electoral information to the public and, as detailed above, established for the first time an information center complete with a telephone hotline. The purpose of the center was to provide a means for voters, polling staff, candidate representatives and observers to raise questions, concerns and seek clarification on electoral issues.

Since the electoral law was unchanged from the previous elections, popular convention was that voters were generally familiar with the process. However, many civil society organizations reported to IFES that voters were not always aware of technical aspects of the process. Had there been changes in the electoral law or procedures, the Ministry of the Interior claims it would have been able to quickly and effectively release information to voters.

During the month-long electoral process, the public was bombarded by candidate and campaign-related advertising (in the form of TV and newspaper advertisements and programs, billboards, music, flags, and clothing). Promotional material increased with each round of elections and as competition between contenders grew. This made it difficult for NGOs to have a forum for their civic education messages, especially during the final rounds of elections when broadcast, print and billboard space was already secured by candidates. The most popular means of reaching voters was through visual media (television and billboards). Broadcasters, newspapers, and advertising companies provide free space to NGOs for public interest messages, though as previously noted, space is not always available or ideal during campaign periods. Since air time for advertisements was provided for free (premium placement of messages would have required additional funding), NGOs could not determine when the advertisements were broadcast.

There is a dearth of information for voters on the Internet, and this avenue should be further explored, especially as a platform for posting detailed information on any future electoral reform propositions and for discussions on various electoral issues. A European Union voter education specialist established a website for one NGO, Al-Midan, to post general information about the 2005 parliamentary elections. The website included a question and answer section in which the public could send questions related to the process. Future plans for this website are to include 'chats' on issues related to electoral reform in Lebanon and links to relevant election sites.

The number of Internet users in Lebanon -- currently estimated at 500,000 users (11.2% of the population) -- is rapidly growing. Use of voter information websites, blogs, and interactive chats on civil society issues should be developed and supported, both as an information tool and as a communication means for organizations and individuals interested in democracy issues. Such websites would reach a new, broader audience of Lebanese citizens.

3. PROSPECTS FOR ELECTORAL REFORM

In the period immediately preceding the elections and during the electoral campaign there was one area of consensus among Lebanese politicians and political analysts: Lebanon needs to reform its electoral law. This view is shared by most international observers of the election process, and supported strongly by the EU EOM in their initial statements after the elections. The final report of the IFES Electoral Assistance Program will focus in detail on the election law and highlight areas in need of reform. In this update, however, we briefly assess the prospects of whether an electoral reform will be initiated by the newly elected representatives.

After the elections, IFES initiated a series of meetings with political representatives, political analysts, representatives of civil society and the media to discuss the prospects for electoral reform after the elections. Although these meetings are continuing, it is clear that not all role players are equally optimistic about the prospects that the newly elected representatives would take their pledge to reform the electoral law seriously.

Those who are pessimistic about the prospects for electoral reform argue that the electoral process served to re-emphasize the importance of sectarianism and confessionalism in Lebanese society. They argue that, even though the events of March indicated that the potential for a new political dispensation exists in Lebanon, the political leaders quickly reverted to the practices of previous elections. They contend that the election campaign was once again conducted along familiar sectarian fault lines, returning many of the 'old faces' back to parliament. Consequently, they expect the new parliament will revert to the ways of old; forgetting about their promises to undertake electoral reform and pushing it to the back of the policy agenda until it is too late to conduct any kind of meaningful reform in the run up to the next parliamentary elections in four years. These analysts stress the importance of a sustained effort on the part of the Lebanese civil society and the international community to ensure that electoral reform remains on the agenda.

Those who are optimistic about the prospects for electoral reform argue that, even though many of the old faces are still present, there is a new dynamic in Lebanese politics and it is now difficult for political leaders to ignore demands for electoral reform. They claim that, with the influence of Syria no longer overwhelmingly present in Lebanon, it would be possible for those who support electoral reform to ensure that it remains on the agenda and receives serious attention. Despite their optimism, these analysts agree that sustained pressure is required to ensure that electoral reform is taken seriously.

International attention should focus on enabling civil society organizations to keep electoral reform on the policy agenda, and to make meaningful contributions to the debate on electoral reform. In addition, the international community should be ready to provide technical support to the Lebanese legislators when deliberating on the new law.

Annex 1.

The key broadcast and print media in Lebanon:

TV Stations:	Radio:	Newspapers:
Tele-Liban (state owned)	Radio Leban (State run)	An-Nahar
Lebanese Broadcasting Corp. LBC	Voice of Lebanon	Al-Safir
Future TV	Radio Delta	Al-Anwar
Al-Manar TV	Radio One	Al-Mustaqbal
New TV	Radio Orient	Al-Diyar
		Daily Star (English)
		L'Orient – Le Jour (French)
News agency:		
Lebanese National News Agency (state run)		