



Monitoring the 2009 Lebanese Parliamentary Elections

May 19, 2009

Introduction	1
Monitoring Organizations	1
Non-Lebanese Monitoring Organizations	1
Organizations for Accreditation and Reform	3
Lebanese Organizations.....	3
Governmental Commission	4
Importance of Elections Monitoring	4
Limitations.....	4
Recommendations	5

Introduction

The upcoming Lebanese parliamentary elections on 7 June 2009 are expected to have a significant impact on Lebanon, as well as on the regional and international spheres. This explains the unprecedented attention these elections have generated beyond the Lebanese borders. As a result, several local and international organizations have decided to monitor the elections.

Monitoring Organizations

Non-Lebanese Monitoring Organizations

Organization	Brief Description
The European Union Election Observation Mission (EUEOM) www.eueomlebanon.org	<p>A vital component of the European Union activities that works to promote democracy and human rights worldwide. It was the only organization that provided observers for the 2005 Lebanese parliamentary elections and is expected to be the largest electoral observation mission in 2009.</p> <p>More than 100 observers will take part in the mission under the guidance of European lawmaker Jose Ignacio Salafranca Sanchez-Neyra. Because of their earlier work in Lebanon and the region, the EU election observers bring significant experience to their mission. A key concern is the security of the elections as was clearly articulated by Michael Miller, the EU's chargé d'affaires. However, the mission, which will last through the post-election period, has set a wider scope for its activities including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The assessing of the election process, its legal framework, the political environment and campaign, electoral preparations, voting and the counting of ballots;2. The issuing of a brief statement upon the conclusion of the elections summarizing their contributions and offering their overall reaction to the election process; and3. The publication of a more detailed report on their findings as well as recommendations for future improvement

<p>The Carter Center www.cartercenter.org</p>	<p>A non-governmental, non-profit organization founded in 1982 by former US President Jimmy Carter and his wife Rosalynn. The Center works on advancing human rights, strengthening democracy, and promoting development in the world. It has sent teams of observers to monitor elections in more than 28 countries since 1989. The Carter Center opened an office in Beirut in late January 2009 and was accredited by the Lebanese Ministry of the Interior and Municipalities in March 2009.</p> <p>The team of observers that is being sent to Lebanon represents six countries: Portugal, Belgium, Iraq, the United Kingdom, Albania, and the United States. Their assessment will focus on the administration of the elections, the campaign period, voting and counting procedures, electoral complaints, election law, appeals mechanisms, as well as other issues related to the overall electoral process in Lebanon.</p> <p>The Center's evaluation will be made against Lebanese electoral laws, the Constitution, and the country's international commitments regarding democratic elections. The Center's long term observers will be joined by other short term observers from other countries.</p> <p>The Carter Center's work in Lebanon include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1- Deploying several long term election observers in early April; 2- Meeting with representatives of political parties, civil society groups, domestic and international groups, and government official; 3- Monitoring the administration of the elections, the campaign period, voting and counting procedures, electoral complaints and appeals mechanisms; and 4- Evaluating the Lebanese electoral law, the constitution, and the country's international commitments regarding democratic elections.
<p>The National Democratic Institute (NDI) www.ndi.org</p>	<p>A nonprofit, nonpartisan organization working to support and strengthen democratic institutions worldwide. NDI has been present in Lebanon since 1995 and it opened its current office in 2001.</p> <p>A delegation from the Institute visited Lebanon in early May to assess the preparations for the parliamentary elections. The delegation was composed of the president of NDI, Kenneth Wollack, the chairperson of NDI and former U.S. Secretary of State, Madeleine K. Albright, the former Prime Minister of Canada, Joseph Clark, the director of Middle East programs at the Aspen Institute, Toni G. Verstandig, and the NDI's regional director for the Middle East and North Africa, Leslie Campbell.</p> <p>NDI has recently reported noticeable improvements over the past elections in terms of the accreditation of international observers, the formation of an election supervisory committee, impartial administration, campaign finance and media regulations, the ability to challenge and adjudicate election results, voter education, and logistical and security issues.</p> <p>NDI's work in Lebanon include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1- Assisting with civil society initiatives and civic education programs designed to increase citizen participation in Lebanese Politics; 2- Conducting strategic consultations and training of trainers for DPNA (Development of People and Nature Association) in 2006 and 2007; 3- Deploying several long term election observers; 4- Partnering with the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies (LCPS) in 2006 to establish the Focus Group Research Center (FGRC) as the only independent, qualitative research center in Lebanon; and 5- Developing women participation programs to improve the effective participation of women in the political process.

Organizations for Accreditation and Reform

<p>The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) www.ifes.org</p>	<p>An independent, non-governmental organization providing professional support to electoral democracy. IFES was found in 1987 and has worked in more than 100 countries.</p> <p>In Lebanon, IFES has provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, which is responsible for the election process in the country. This includes supporting a range of training programs and the development of Ministry's website for elections. IFES is not, however, directly involved in monitoring the elections. IFES is working on several projects related to the electoral campaign some of which are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Compact for Election and Democratic Assistance and Reform (CEDAR) I and II; 2. Supporting the electoral process in Lebanon; 3. Mapping the risk of election-related conflict in Lebanon; and 4. Reforming the legal framework of the elections in Lebanon
<p>The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) www.undp.org</p>	<p>The UN's network that advocates for change and helps connect countries with needed knowledge, experience and resources for civic projects such as elections. UNDP has offices in 166 countries where they work to find solutions to global and national challenges. Some of the UNDP activities in Lebanon include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sponsoring initiatives beyond the traditional technical assistance to electoral events with long term capacity development to electoral institutions (such as the project "Strengthening Electoral Processes in Lebanon"); 2. Offering technical assistance programs that promote electoral law reform and ensures the highest standards for elections (on-going since September 2005); and 3. Organizing training sessions with the assistance of the Ministry of Interior for reporters and journalists regarding the objectivity of media coverage along with technical support for the one day coverage of the parliamentary elections.
<h3>Lebanese Organizations</h3>	
<p>Coalition Libanaise pour l'Observation des Elections (CLOE)</p>	<p><i>[Lebanese Coalition for Elections Monitoring]</i> A coalition of more than one hundred NGO's. This coalition is headed by the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE). It consists of diverse organizations and individuals representing youth, women, people with disabilities, research centers and the media. The primary objective of CLOE is to provide LADE with the needed human resources to conduct electoral observation.</p>
<p>The Foundation for Human and Humanitarian Rights (FHHR) www.fhhr.org</p>	<p>An independent non-governmental Lebanese human rights organization that was founded in 1989. It enjoys the designation as one of the leading human rights organizations in the country. FHHR will be observing the elections as well as monitoring the systematic implementation of Lebanese electoral laws.</p>
<p>Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE) www.ladeleb.org</p>	<p>A Lebanese organization which aims at insuring democratic and free parliamentary elections by advocating and promoting election laws and system reform based on international democratic standards, educating voters, and observing the elections. LADE has produced several publications about campaign financing regulations, expatriate voting mechanisms, media coverage regulations, women participation in the public life, special needs accommodations, as well as several other issues related to the electoral process.</p>

Governmental Commission

The Supervisory Commission on the Election Campaign (SCEC)

www.elections.gov.lb

A governmental body for election monitoring formed by Ministry of Interior and headed by Judge Ghassan Abu Alwan. It seeks to detect violations, observe the implementation of the electoral laws and develop domestic election monitoring. According to Article 19 from the Parliamentary Election Law no.25 on supervising the electoral campaign, the commission shall be in charge of the following tasks and prerogatives:

1. Receive requests from independent print and audio visual media wishing to participate in the paid electoral advertising pursuant to the provisions of this law.
2. Supervise the compliance of rolls, candidates, and mass media of any form, with the rules and regulations governing electoral competition pursuant to the provisions of this law.
3. Supervise electoral spending pursuant to the provisions of this law.
4. Receive and audit the financial statements of electoral campaigns of lists and candidates within one month after the polling day.
5. Produce a report on the Commission's activities, which will be forwarded to the Minister, President of the Republic, Prime Minister, and Speaker of the Parliament - The report will also be published in the official gazette.

In addition to the aforementioned organizations, the **Arab League**, **Russia** and **Turkey** will also send special envoys to monitor the elections.

Importance of Elections Monitoring

The mere fact that international, regional, and local organizations have committed to monitoring and observing the Lebanese parliamentary elections is an indication of the importance the international community is giving to the building of Lebanon's democratic institutions and processes. In particular, the presence of these observers will help in:

1. Ensuring the fairness of the elections, to the extent possible given the presence of arms with groups outside the governmental jurisdiction;
2. Giving credibility to the electoral results in the eyes of the Lebanese and the international community;
3. Exposing major violations of the electoral process, and prevent certification of unlawful votes;
4. Decreasing the chances of challenging and adjudicating the results;
5. Encouraging expatriates to travel to Lebanon and exert their right to vote;
6. Prompting the Lebanese authorities develop future electoral laws and regulations to avoid flaws detected in the current electoral system; and
7. Decreasing (possibly) voter's intimidation by armed militias in their regions of presence.

It is necessary here to point out that this assistance is not foolproof as we highlight in the next section on the limitations.

Limitations

Assessing the fairness of the upcoming Lebanese elections remains a challenge despite the current monitoring systems in place due to the following reasons:

1. The parliamentary elections are taking place as Hezbollah and other armed groups continue to control large areas of the country. Electoral observers may not be able to adequately detect violations such as voters' intimidation and ballots tampering in areas under militias control;
2. The lack of pre-printed ballots is problematic as it could compromise the secrecy of the vote, a deficiency that cannot be mitigated by election monitors;

3. Security threats and violence remain a significant obstacle to the conduct of free and fair elections. Monitoring groups are neither mandated nor equipped to detect and report security incidents (Although some security incidents are being reported by IFES through their LEVRA project); and
4. The limitation inherent in the conduct of short-term election monitoring as opposed to long-term monitoring - Given the complexities and obstacles facing the implementation of democratic processes and systems in Lebanon, it is not feasible to expect monitors, in a short period of time, to carefully review and understand the election laws and its motivations, understand the electoral system and its complexities, and to uncover violations and mitigate incidents that will preserve the integrity of the elections.

Recommendations

The presence of international and regional monitors and observers in Lebanon for this round of parliamentary elections, despite the obstacles they face and limitations of the process, is by itself a significant boost to promoting democracy in Lebanon and the region. In order to maximize the benefit of these efforts, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Information Gathering - Access to all geographic locations in Lebanon must be assured before, during, and after Election Day guaranteeing full movement for monitors without any restrictions for observing, gathering information and verifying processes. In addition citizens and organizations should have reasonable access to monitoring groups to be able to report violations and other concerns about the electoral process.
2. Information Processing and Coordination - A central repository for data storage as well as for all relevant information such as laws, voter demographics, candidates, etc. must be made available to monitors and observers in both centralized and distributed modes taking into considerations the various participating organizations and their roles. Coordination among the different monitoring groups is essential to maximize the benefit of the presence of multiple organizations with diverse mandates.
3. Reporting – Monitoring Organizations should announce early on the mechanism of issuing their reports on the elections, clarifying dates of release, means of dissemination, intended recipients (e.g. the Lebanese Government, the Press, the International Community) and the use of the reports in certifying the results of the elections.
4. Actions - Specific actions to be taken in cases of fraud, intimidation, security threats, and violence must be clearly defined. The various and differing roles of monitors, the GOL, the Electoral Commission, and the Security and Armed Forces should be synchronized to avoid conflicts and ensure the safe and lawful progression of the elections.
5. Role of the International Community - Engaging Lebanese authorities, exposing flaws, recognizing results, or rejecting them in cases of irregularities, by the international community should take place in a firm and timely manner to safeguard Lebanon's democratic process and systems on Election Day.