



LEBANON'S 2022 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS – HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

**A REPORT BY THE LEBANESE CENTER FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS**





Lebanon is currently rife with political instability and sectarian conflict, which is compounded by a severe economic crisis. Due to the sharp increase in poverty, inflation, and unemployment, and the collapse of the financial system as a whole, the World Bank [stated](#) that Lebanon is currently experiencing one of the “most severe economic collapses worldwide since the 1850s.” [According](#) to Human Rights Watch, by the end of 2021 “more than 80 percent of the country’s residents did not have access to basic rights, including health, education, and an adequate standard of living, such as adequate housing and electricity.” Thus, the 2022 Lebanese Parliamentary Elections were highly consequential for the stability and well-being of Lebanon.

The Lebanese elections took place on May 15, 2022, with 1043 candidates running for 128 seats in the Lebanese Parliament. This was the first election since the Lebanese Uprising of 2019, where millions of Lebanese civilians protested newly imposed taxes, government mismanagement of the economy, corruption, sectarianism, and the lack of access to basic necessities such as food, water, housing, healthcare, and electricity. Several new political parties and movements have emerged since the uprisings, challenging the traditional establishment parties’ hold on power.

Due to the economic depression, political instability, and emergence of new political parties and movements challenging the old order, there was widespread [fear](#) that Lebanon’s elections would not be free and fair. For this reason, and as part of its ongoing monitoring for human rights violations, the Lebanese Center for Human Rights monitored human rights violations during—and leading up to—the 2022 elections. While other organizations—such as the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections ([LADE](#)) and the European Union—monitored the overall fairness of Lebanon’s 2022 elections, the purview of our work was significantly narrower. Our report does not address issues of corruption, bribery, violations of Lebanese law, or the structural deficiencies within Lebanon’s electoral system. Rather, the scope of this report is limited to human rights violations leading up to and during the election.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (hereinafter “ICCPR) serves as the primary human rights treaty underpinning our work.¹ Lebanon has signed and ratified the ICCPR, and therefore it is legally binding under international law. The relevant provisions of the ICCPR enumerate the following rights: the right to run for office and vote in free, fair, universal, and equal elections; the right to freedom of movement; the right to life; the right to be free from arbitrary detention; the rights of association and peaceful assembly; the rights of freedom of expression and opinion; and the right to be free from discrimination and violence. Furthermore, the ICCPR mandates that these rights are to be enjoyed equally, “without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.”²

¹ UN General Assembly, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 16 December 1966, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 999, p. 171, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b3aa0.html>

² ICCPR Article 2

Pursuant to these legally binding provisions, our report details violations within the following categories:

- Harassment, threats, and violence against political candidates;
- Harassment, threats, and violence against voters;
- Restrictions on freedom of movement intended to affect the ability to vote, including roadblocks, threats, violence, or government orders;
- Arbitrary detention of political candidates by either state forces or non-state actors;
- Arbitrary detention of voters by either state forces or non-state actors;
- Menacing presence of armed or unarmed individuals or groups intending to intimidate voters near polling centers or along transit routes to polling centers;
- Attempts to threaten or harass voters due to their gender, race, religion, national origin, or political affiliation.

As this report details, we compiled significant human rights violations in nearly all of these categories during and leading up to Lebanon's election. The substantial human rights violations documented in this report reflects the failure of political authorities to create an environment where free and fair elections can take place in compliance with Lebanon's human rights obligations under international law. This report also reflects the failure of Lebanon's major political parties to prevent or mitigate the human rights violations by members or supporters of their party. **We call on Lebanon's newly elected authorities to implement policies to prevent widespread human rights violations in future Lebanese elections in order to ensure fairness and comply with Lebanon's human rights obligations under international law.**

VIOLATIONS OF THE RIGHT TO POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

RECALLING THAT ARTICLE 25 OF THE ICCPR PROTECTS THE RIGHT OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION, THE FOLLOWING SECTION DOCUMENTS THE HARASSMENT, THREATS, AND VIOLENCE AGAINST POLITICAL CANDIDATES:

- A few weeks before the election, a group allegedly of Amal supporters [threatened](#) and attacked independent candidate Hichem Hayek and his supporters in the Southern village of Sarafand. The group threw rocks at and beat several supporters of Hayek and fired a gun towards Hayek. The group also established roadblocks to prevent people from attending Hayek's event.
- Two days before the election, several members of the campaign team for independent candidate Verena El Amil were [attacked](#) in Bourj Hammoud by alleged supporters of the Tashnag Party for pamphleting. One of the attackers was a member of Bourj Hammoud's Municipality police, as the video shows.
- An unknown individual [attempted](#) to run over candidate Pierre Abu Assi with a car in Hammana on election day. According to Assi's statement following the incident, three of his bodyguards were injured.
- Alleged Supporters of Hezbollah and Amal [intimidated](#) independent candidate Wassef al-Harakeh at the Bourj al-Barajneh voting center.

VIOLATIONS OF THE RIGHT TO VOTE AND THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND OPINION

RECALLING THAT ARTICLE 25 OF THE ICCPR PROTECTS THE RIGHT TO VOTE AND ARTICLE 19 PROTECTS THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM TO HOLD OPINIONS WITHOUT INTERFERENCE, THE FOLLOWING SECTION DOCUMENTS HARASSMENT, THREATS, AND VIOLENCE AGAINST VOTERS:

- In Haret Hreik, Michel Aoun's Presidential Guards [attacked](#) and dragged away a voter who had "insulted" President Aoun while the President was on his way to vote. The man was reportedly arrested after continuing to "insult" President Aoun. A video of the incident can be seen [here](#).
- A family was reportedly [attacked](#) in the Karak region while on their way to vote in Ferzol by unidentified assailants. This report has not been independently verified.
- Alleged supporters of the Lebanese Forces and the Free Patriotic Movement [attacked](#) each other during a visit by FPM leader Gebran Bassil. Three people were injured and taken to the hospital.
- Voting was halted for two hours in Al-Bireh in Akkar due to a fight between delegates and an [attack](#) on the clerk inside the polling center. The incident ended with the Lebanese army [shooting](#) into the air to break up the clashes.
- In Nabatieh-Ansar, alleged Hezbollah supporters [harassed](#) and took photos of Hussein Bassal, an independent journalist with the Lebanese outlet "Megaphone," after one of his videos documenting the election went viral. Alleged supporters of Hezbollah then chased him, forcing him to hide in the office of an opposition party, and then attacked him. He was eventually escorted away by the Lebanese army.

- LADE observers were forcibly expelled from voting areas in Tyre.
- LADE observers were harassed in Sidon and Chekka, Batroun.
- LADE observers were forced to leave the Ramadi polling station in Tyre after being threatened by a representative of Amal.
- LADE observers were forced to leave the Mazraat Et Tout polling station in Baalbek after being threatened by representatives of Hezbollah.
- A LADE observer was attacked at the Kafr Melki polling station in Saida by a representative of Hezbollah.
- LADE observers were attacked by unknown personnel at voting centers in Nabi Chit, Chouf-Mont Liban, and Mansourieh.
- A team of observers from the European Union delegation was [expelled](#) from a polling center by the Lebanese Armed Forces while trying to observe vote counting.

[HARASSMENT, THREATS, AND VIOLENCE AGAINST ELECTION OBSERVERS](#)

VIOLATIONS OF THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

RECALLING THAT ARTICLE 12 OF THE ICCPR PROTECTS THE RIGHT OF FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT, THE FOLLOWING SECTION DOCUMENTS RESTRICTIONS ON FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT INTENDED TO AFFECT THE ABILITY TO VOTE, INCLUDING ROADBLOCKS, THREATS, VIOLENCE, OR GOVERNMENT ORDERS:

- The city of Nabatieh [issued](#) a municipal order restricting the movement of Syrian refugees by imposing a curfew from Saturday to Monday on the weekend of the election. In part, the order read that “Displaced Syrians may not leave their houses starting 6pm on Saturday May 14 until 8am on Monday May 16 except for necessary reasons.”
- It was [reported](#), but not verified, that similar municipal orders in West Bekka and other areas restricted the movement of Syrian refugees during the weekend of the election.
- Hussein Bassal, the photographer attacked by alleged Hezbollah supporters near a voting center in Ansar was chased to the office of “Together for Change.” Alleged Hezbollah supporters surrounded the office, and the photographer and other supporters of the “Together for Change” list inside the office were unable to leave, [restricting](#) their freedom of movement.
- The Ministry of the Interior [failed](#) to provide adequate access to polling stations for people with disabilities, infringing on their freedom of movement and affecting their [ability](#) to vote. According to the European Union observing delegation, 43% of the voting centers visited did not have first floor accessibility for people with disabilities.
- A candidate on the “Together for Change” list had his freedom of movement [restricted](#) due to a hostile group’s constant presence outside of his house, and attempts to break in.

VIOLATIONS OF THE RIGHT AGAINST ARBITRARY DETENTION

- A delegate of the Lebanese Forces was arbitrarily [kidnapped](#) and interrogated by a group allegedly associated with Hezbollah in Badnayel. She was eventually released.

RECALLING THAT ARTICLE 9 OF THE ICCPR PROTECTS INDIVIDUALS AGAINST ARBITRARY DETENTION, THE FOLLOWING SECTION DOCUMENTS ARBITRARY DETENTION OF POLITICAL CANDIDATES OR VOTERS BY EITHER STATE FORCES OR NON-STATE ACTORS

VIOLATIONS OF THE PRINCIPLES OF NON-DISCRIMINATION

RECALLING THAT THE ICCPR MANDATES THAT ALL OF THESE RIGHTS ARE TO BE ENJOYED EQUALLY, “WITHOUT DISTINCTION OF ANY KIND, SUCH AS RACE, COLOUR, SEX, LANGUAGE, RELIGION, POLITICAL OR OTHER OPINION, NATIONAL OR SOCIAL ORIGIN, PROPERTY, BIRTH OR OTHER STATUS,”³ THE FOLLOWING SECTION DOCUMENTS INSTANCES OF THREATS, HARASSMENT, OR DISCRIMINATION OF VOTERS OR CANDIDATES DUE TO THEIR GENDER, RACE, RELIGION, NATIONAL ORIGIN, OR POLITICAL AFFILIATION:

- The city of Nabatieh [issued](#) a municipal order restricting the movement of Syrian refugees by imposing a curfew from Saturday to Monday on the weekend of the election. In part, the order read that “Displaced Syrians may not leave their houses starting 6pm on Saturday May 14 until 8am on Monday May 16 except for necessary reasons.”
- Maharat [studied](#) the social media and online harassment that women faced in the months leading up to the election. The study, which analyzed the social media comments on the pages and profiles of several dozen female political candidates and activists, found that a total of 8% of all comments contained some sort of harassment or threat of physical/sexual violence.

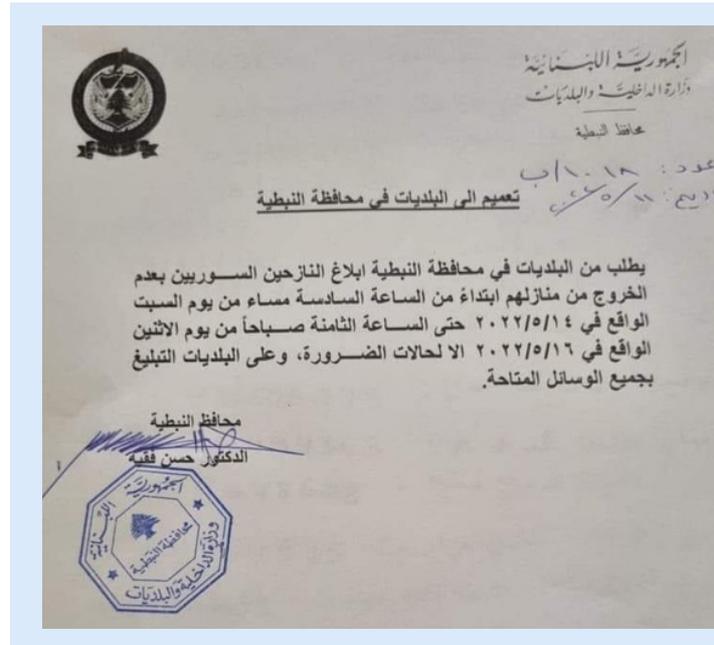


Photo Credits: Hassan Ammar

- During an interview on Al Jadeed, the communications director of the Lebanese Forces Party repeatedly [harassed](#) and attempted to silence May Khreish of the Free Patriotic Movement, demanding that the TV program cut her off while she was talking.
- LADE observed that there were many instances of threats, harassment, and physical/sexual violence against women, due solely to their gender. LADE [observed](#) “7 cases of abuse of women by security forces (recording cases of harassment, pressure, verbal and physical violence, threats), 6 cases of maltreating women by electoral machine staff (recording cases of harassment, pressure, verbal and physical violence, threats), 6 cases of maltreating women by polling station bodies (recording cases of harassment, pressure, verbal and physical violence, threats).”

³ ICCPR Article 2

RECOMMENDATIONS

Article II of the ICCPR states that “Each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes to respect and to ensure to all individuals within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction the rights recognized in the present Covenant, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.”

Moreover, all state parties are required to take “necessary steps...to adopt such laws or other measures as may be necessary to give effect to the rights recognized in the present Covenant.”⁴ States must not only guarantee the full and equal enjoyment of these rights, but also provide an effective remedy for any violation of these rights.

Furthermore, as the Human Rights Committee made clear in General Comment No. 31, the ICCPR is binding on “[a]ll branches of government (executive, legislative and judicial), and other public or governmental authorities, at whatever level - national, regional or local.”⁵

The HRC further notes that “Article 2 requires that States Parties adopt legislative, judicial, administrative, educative and other appropriate measures in order to fulfill their legal obligations.”

Thus, we call on Lebanon’s newly elected representatives to “adopt legislative, judicial, administrative, educative and other appropriate measures” in order to guarantee that human rights violations—as detailed in this report—do not occur in future elections, and ensure that Lebanon lives up to its mandatory human rights obligations under international law.



⁴ Id.

⁵ CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add. 1326 May 2004