



Европейски парламент Parlamento Europeo Evropský parlament Europa-Parlamentet Europäisches Parlament
Euroopa Parlament Ευρωπαϊκό Κοινοβούλιο European Parliament Parlement européen Parlaimint na hEorpa
Europski parlament Parlamento europeo Eirópas Parlaments Europos Parlamentas Európai Parlament
Parlament Ewropew Europees Parlement Parliament Europejski Parlamento Europeu Parlamentul European
Európsky parlament Evropski parlament Euroopan parlamentti Europaparlamentet

**REPORT ON THE
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTION OBSERVATION DELEGATION TO
THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION IN LEBANON
(3 May - 8 May 2018)**

- Annexes:**
- A** List of participants
 - B** Declaration of Mr SALAFRANCA SÁNCHEZ-NEYRA José Ignacio, Chair of the EP Delegation
 - C** EU Election Observation Mission Press Release

INTRODUCTION

On 15 March 2018, Parliament's Conference of Presidents authorised the sending of a delegation to observe the Parliamentary Elections in Lebanon, scheduled for 6 May 2018.

The EP Delegation was made up of seven members led by Mr SALAFRANCA SÁNCHEZ-NEYRA José Ignacio (EPP, Spain). The other members were Mr Francesc GAMBUS (EPP, Spain), Mr David Maria SASSOLI (S&D, Italy), Ms Marietje SCHAAKE (ALDE, Netherlands), Mr Laurențiu REBEGA (ECR, Romania), Ms Marisa MATIAS (GUE/NGL, Portugal) and Mr Nicolas BAY (ENF, France).

The European Parliament delegation carried out its activities in Lebanon from 3 May to 8 May 2018. Following the constitutive meeting which took place on 10 April, MEPs David Sassoli and José Ignacio suggested adding a visit to the United Nations Interim Force In Lebanon (UNIFIL), located in the South of the country, to the initial programme. The visit required specific logistic and security measures and therefore additional time excess needed. The mission duration was therefore extended by one day.

As usual, it was integrated into the EU Election Observation Mission (EOM), the Chief Observer, led by Ms Elena Valenciano (S&D, Spain). The EP delegation was present in Lebanon from 3 May 2018 and was led by MEP Mr Salafranca Sanchez-Neyra José Ignacio (EPP, Spain). These elections took place almost one decade after the previous elections in 2009. The country introduced a new electoral law in 2017 and many recommendations that were made under the 2009 EOM were taken into account, such as the introduction of a new proportional system, voting rights for Lebanese citizens residing abroad and improved secrecy voter conditions.

In total, the EU EOM deployed 132 observers from the 28 EU Member States, as well as Norway and Switzerland, across the country to assess the whole electoral process against Lebanon's international obligations and commitments for democratic elections as well as its own laws. On Election Day, observers visited over 525 polling stations in 15 major districts and 26 minor districts of Lebanon to observe voting and counting.

Parliament's delegation fully endorsed the findings of the EU EOM. The European Parliament expressed its gratitude to Chief Observer Elena Valenciano, Deputy Chief Observer José Antonio de Gabriel and the entire Core Team for their excellent cooperation both before and during the mission, as well as to Ambassador Christina Lassen, Head of the European Union Delegation to Lebanon and his colleagues for their support.

BACKGROUND

The Lebanese Parliament passed a new electoral law, with the agreement of almost all political parties, in June 2017. The previous eight years were marked by successive coalition governments, three extensions of parliament's term and more than two years of a vacant presidency. This resulted in resignations, deadlocks over appointments and disagreement over reforms. The law introduced proportional representation and preferential voting for the first time and remapped constituency

boundaries. For the 2018 elections, Lebanese expatriates were able to vote abroad for the first time across the world and for the first time the EU EOM observed the elections in consulates and embassies abroad. After nine years without elections, a large number of first-time voters joined the voter register.

One hundred and twenty eight seats were contested during 6 May parliamentary elections. The seats were shared equally between Christians and Muslims, further divided amongst seven Christian and four Muslim denominations. Lebanon recognises eighteen different religious groups. Eleven of them have political representation in parliament). Seventy-seven lists contested the elections, with 597 candidates, among them 86 women.

The new electoral system introduced new fields of competition previously unknown in most areas of the country. This has altered the political architecture, forcing parties to build ad hoc alliances with a broad, dynamic set of partners, established district by district. It has come as the lines between Lebanon's two big blocs – the March 8 and March 14 alliances have gradually blurred, but not entirely disappeared. Both alliances were formed in the wake of the assassination of Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri in 2005. The pro-Syrian 8 March Alliance, led by Hezbollah includes the Amal movement, the Free Patriotic Movement, the Marada Party, the Syrian Social Nationalist Party and numerous smaller blocs. The anti-Syrian 14 March alliance, led by the Future Movement includes the Lebanese Forces and Kataeb. Candidates emerged from civil society as a new political force in the 2016 municipal elections. This trend was consolidated with the drawing up of civil society lists for the 2018 parliamentary elections.

PROGRAMME OF THE DELEGATION

Prior to the Election Day, the EP delegation met the EOM Core Team, led by Chief Observer Elena VALENCIANO and the EU Heads of Missions. Meetings were held with the representatives of the main political parties, in order to gain a better understanding of the political landscape of the country. The EP delegation met with the President Aoun (Free Patriotic Movement), the Prime Minister, Saad Hariri (Future Movement), the Minister of Interior and Municipalities, Mr Nouhad Machnouk (Future Movement), the Secretary General of the Lebanese Forces, Chantal Sarkis, the Vice President of the Kataeb Party, Dr Salim Sayegh, the leader of the Progressive Socialist Party, Mr Walid Joumblatt and the Head of Hezbollah International Office, Mr Ammar Moussawi.

On Election Day, the EP delegation split into three teams, observing the capital city Beirut, North of Lebanon (Batroun, Jbeil, Amshit and Beirut) and Chouf and Aley from the opening to the closing of polling stations. The three observation teams confirmed that the voting process took place in a peaceful, efficient and transparent way. Even though lawful campaign activities were permitted, they were sometimes conducted too close to the polling stations.

The press conference - during which Mr José Ignacio Salafranca presented the findings of the EP Delegation, alongside the Chief Observer - took place on 8 May 2018 and was extremely well attended.

ASSESSMENT OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

The overall assessment of the Lebanese Parliamentary elections by the EU EOM found that the elections were well conducted, particularly in the context of the new electoral law that had been introduced one year before the elections were held. All political parties declared that the stability of the country was paramount in the context of the turmoil in the region. Nevertheless, improvements are needed to increase the participation of women in politics, to ensure fairer media access for candidates, to avoid conflict of interests and strengthen the supervision of campaign finance.

Voting on Election Day was generally peaceful and the administration of polling was efficient and well organized. Counting and tabulation was transparent. For the first time in its history, the EOM observed out of country voting. Cristina Castagnoli and Perla Srour-Gandon (EP officials) observed in the Lebanese Embassy in Brussels on Sunday 29 April.

The EP Delegation noted that the legal framework constitutes sufficient basis for holding democratic elections, in line with the international standards for elections. Electoral reform brought important improvements to the legal framework and integrated several key recommendations proposed by civil society and previous EU election observation missions. Official, printed ballots, an essential safeguard for the secrecy of the vote and a potential counter-measure to vote-buying were introduced for the first time. It was also the first election in which Lebanese nationals living abroad were able to vote.

It has been stressed that although numerous concerns and criticisms have been raised by civil society and candidates regarding the candidatures of the Ministers of Interior and of Foreign Affairs, generally all layers of the electoral administration conducted their work in a transparent and impartial manner. On a technical level, the election administration organized the elections according to its mandate and in a timely fashion, meeting all the legal and operational deadlines, including the training of polling staff, printing of electoral documents and ballots, and delivery of sensitive and non-sensitive material in-country and abroad.

The EU EOM has monitored the media environment all along the duration of the mission and stressed that Lebanon enjoys a lively and pluralistic media environment, with a number of media outlets offering a variety of political opinions. However, this pluralism reflects the country's confessional divides. Most broadcast, print and online media are aligned with a religious or political side. Television was the main source of information, followed by news distributed through social networks. The Constitution guarantees freedom of expression and this was largely respected during the campaign period. However, defamation of the President, public officials, the army or the flag are criminal offences. The EU EOM media monitoring showed that the election coverage by private broadcast media resulted in an uneven playing field for contestants and affected the availability of genuine information for voters. Moreover the EOM noticed that unclear legal provisions and the absence of comprehensive regulations permitted several private TV channels to offer paid access to contestants in a variety of formats, including appearances on discussion shows and in newscasts. It would be desirable for the future to guarantee fair access to the media, particularly for women and young independent candidates.

RESULTS

Preliminary results for the Elections showed that voting was generally peaceful and the administration of polling efficient, with the presence of politically diverse candidate and list agents. Counting and tabulation was transparent. Although rumours of irregularities spread around the country, they were not confirmed by the EU EOM.

The EU EOM said that lawful campaign activities were conducted throughout the country, although in some cases they were too close to polling station, which is unlawful. Vote buying was reported by several observers and this is reportedly a usual practice in the country.

It is also underlined that a low turnout suggested voter confusion and apathy, despite the fact that Lebanese voters have not been called to the polls for nine years. Stronger campaign finance regulations and implementing capacity, in a country where campaign spending is high, are needed to support a level playing field, particularly for a new generation of independents and women. Inequitable access to media, favouring those with the largest campaign funds, could be addressed.

The new Parliament sees a clear defeat of Prime Minister Hariri passing from 33 seats to 21; a clear affirmation of Hezbollah and its allies of Shia speaker Berri from 31 to 39 and of the far right Christian Lebanese Forces from 8 to 14 (leader Geagea). The Christian Maronite Free Patriotic movement of President Aoun passes from 21 to 28. Out of the 128 elected members of Parliament, 6 are women (there were 4 in the last Parliament).

PM Hariri will be most probably be confirmed, but with a much weaker majority. It is still to be seen which role a stronger Hezbollah will play in the country.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The EOM remained in Lebanon during the entire electoral process and produced a final report of the conclusion of the electoral process. The final report proposed a set of recommendations aiming to improve aspects of the electoral process.

At the press conference, the President of the European Parliament Delegation, Mr. Jose Ignacio Salafranca, said: “Lebanon has always been an important partner for the European Union and the European Parliament. We reiterate our strong interest in and support of the country”.

Mr Salafranca underlined that our relations with Lebanon are strong, demonstrated by the Association Agreement signed with the European Union in 2002. This cooperation was reinforced by the adoption of the following five priority areas: security and anti-terrorism; good governance and the rule of law; growth and employment creation; migration and mobility as well as the promotion of dialogue and coordination.

The European Parliament would like to strengthen its political dialogue with the Lebanese Parliament through parliamentary cooperation and to establish a technical exchange programme and capacity building projects. DEAC will develop post elections activities in the country and launch cooperation with the newly elected Lebanese Parliament.

The European Union and the European Parliament stand ready to continue to contribute to the efforts in support of the agreement, stability, sovereignty and the territorial integrity of Lebanon.



PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN LEBANON ELECTION OBSERVATION DELEGATION

3-8 MAY 2018

List of Members

1. Mr José Ignacio SALAFRANCA SÁNCHEZ-NEYRA, EPP, Spain - Head of Delegation
2. Mr Francesc GAMBUS EPP, Spain
3. Mr David Maria SASSOLI, S&D, Italy
4. Ms Marietje SCHAAKE, ALDE, Netherlands
5. Mr Laurențiu REBEGA, ECR, Romania
6. Ms Marisa MATIAS, GUE/NGL, Portugal
7. Mr Nicolas BAY, ENF, France

Déclaration du Président de la Délégation du Parlement européen
Monsieur José Ignacio SALAFRANCA

Je voudrais également vous souhaiter la bienvenue à cette Conférence de Presse de la Mission d'Observation Electorale.

Le Liban a toujours été un partenaire important pour l'Union européenne et pour le Parlement européen: nous avons pu y observer les élections en 2005, en 2009 et notre présence, aujourd'hui, permet au Parlement européen de réitérer son vif intérêt pour le pays du Cèdre et de lui assurer de tout son soutien, tout particulièrement lors de cet exercice démocratique que sont les élections législatives.

Nous tenons, tout d'abord, à saluer le peuple libanais qui s'est rendu aux urnes lors des élections de dimanche dernier, dans un climat calme et ordonné, même si neuf années se sont écoulées depuis les précédentes élections législatives.

Cette élection constitue une première dans l'histoire du pays qui, avec la nouvelle loi électorale, a permis aux électeurs libanais de l'étranger de voter dans leur pays de résidence et a apporté d'importantes innovations, telles que le scrutin proportionnel ou l'introduction d'un bulletin de vote pré-imprimé. Ces éléments sont issus des principales recommandations formulées par la précédente Observation électorale de l'Union européenne en 2009.

La délégation du PE, qui s'insère dans le cadre de l'actuelle Mission d'Observation de l'Union européenne, souscrit à la déclaration préliminaire présentée par Madame Valenciano. Ceci dit, nous voudrions mettre l'accent sur certains aspects qui revêtent pour nous un intérêt particulier:

- Nous nous réjouissons que le scrutin se soit bien déroulé: dans le calme, de manière organisée et consensuelle. Les Libanais ont pu exercer leur devoir citoyen dans un climat apaisé, malgré un plus faible taux de participation par rapport aux élections de 2009, dont il faudra tirer les conclusions, particulièrement pour les jeunes.
- Nous tenons à reconnaître le rôle joué par les forces de sécurité intérieures et de l'armée, qui ont contribué à faciliter les opérations de vote et ont veillé au bon déroulement du processus.
- Nous avons observé que les Libanais ont, pour la majorité, exercé leur vote en connaissance de cause, malgré la perception d'un certain scepticisme sur la compréhension du nouveau système et particulièrement du scrutin.
- Le Parlement européen souhaite aussi rappeler l'importance de la représentation des femmes, notamment au Parlement, et de leur rôle crucial dans la sphère politique qu'il faudrait renforcer. À ce titre, notre Parlement rappelle la recommandation faite en 2009 de réformer la loi concernant la transmission de la nationalité libanaise par les femmes qui à ce jour n'est pas encore possible.

- Le Parlement européen pense aussi, qu'à l'avenir, il serait souhaitable de garantir la transparence des financements des campagnes électorales par le biais d'un cadre électoral qui évite les conflits d'intérêts et permet un accès équitable aux médias.
- Nous suggérons également de renforcer la crédibilité et soutenir les efforts de l'autorité de la Supervisory Commission for Elections (SCE).
- A notre avis, des efforts additionnels seraient à envisager pour faciliter l'accès des personnes âgées ou à mobilité réduite, qui n'était pas toujours assuré.

Je rajouterais les remarques suivantes, en accord avec les valeurs libanaises et les principes internationaux, chers au Parlement européen: la tenue d'élections législatives de manière régulière pourrait favoriser le renouvellement de la classe politique et permettrait d'assurer une représentation inclusive de la société civile. Sur ce point en particulier, la société civile libanaise représente un atout et une richesse unique dans la région qu'il faut protéger et encourager tout en tenant compte des attentes de la jeunesse libanaise.

Nous souhaiterions souligner que notre relation avec le Liban est une relation forte, qui s'inscrit dans le cadre de l'accord d'association signé avec l'Union européenne en 2002. Cette coopération a été renforcée par l'adoption des priorités de partenariats qui concernent cinq domaines suivants: la sécurité et le contre-terrorisme; la bonne gouvernance et l'état de droit; la croissance et la création d'emploi; la migration et la mobilité ainsi que la promotion du dialogue et de la coordination. Le PE souhaite également renforcer son dialogue politique avec le Parlement libanais par le biais de sa coopération parlementaire et établir un programme d'échanges techniques et un renforcement des capacités.

L'UE et le Parlement restent toujours disponibles pour continuer à contribuer aux efforts en faveur de la concorde, de la stabilité, de la souveraineté et de l'intégrité territoriale du Liban.



Press release

A well-conducted election, but action is needed to improve access for women to political power and to strengthen the supervision of campaign finance

Beirut, 8 May 2018

Chief Observer of the EU election observation mission to Lebanon's 2018 parliamentary elections, Mme. Elena Valenciano, presented the mission's statement of preliminary findings of the 6 May elections today, declaring them well run but needing an injection of reforms.

Mme. Valenciano said: "Some clear facts have emerged from the campaign and election day process that we have observed since the end of March when we arrived. First, it was generally peaceful, with only a few incidents of violence or confrontation. Second, real innovations were introduced, extending the vote to expatriates, making voting more secret and changing the system to a proportional one.

"But it's clear also that more needs to be done to facilitate the participation of women in politics in this country. Affirmative measures were not included in the electoral law agreed in 2017 and, despite the big increase in female candidates in 2018 (86), and the small increase in female MPs (6), there is room for further representation."

Mme. Valenciano, who is a Member of the European Parliament from Spain, also called for the supervisory and sanctioning powers of the Supervisory Commission for Elections (SCE), to be strengthened, saying: "We will be making recommendations which could improve the regulations, and their implementation, governing campaign spending. We think this could make the playing field, which the electoral law has to a degree opened up, more even for all.

The President of the European Parliament Delegation, Mr. Jose Ignacio Salafranca, said: "Lebanon has always been an important partner for the European Union and the European Parliament. We reiterate our strong interest in and support of the country.

"Lebanese people were able to exercise their civic duty in a peaceful atmosphere, despite a lower turnout compared to 2009. The diversity of the Lebanese society is a unique asset in the region that must be preserved, taking into account the expectations of young Lebanese people."

On election day, the EU EOM had over 132 observers on the ground, consisting of long and short-term observers from all Member States of the EU, the European Parliamentary delegation and members of EU embassies in Beirut. They covered election day activities in 527 polling stations, allowing representative samples to be made on important questions such as the secrecy and integrity of the vote, performance of the electoral authorities and access for people with disabilities. This sampling also included EU EOM observation of the expatriate out-of-country voting in ten European countries and early voting in Lebanon.

A core team has been in-country since the end of March and was joined by the 24 long-term observers at the beginning of April. The mission will stay well beyond election day, until the end of May, to observe any legal complaints or disputes that may arise. Some two months after election day, Mme. Valenciano will return to Lebanon to present the mission's final report with an assessment of the comprehensive and long-term observations made and including recommendations for improvements to future electoral processes.

All EU EOM observers are bound by a code of conduct, which requires strict neutrality and non-interference. The EU EOM undertakes its work in accordance with the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation. You can read the [preliminary statement](#) here.

For more information, please contact the press officer of the EU EOM Lebanon 2018:

Paul Anderson
EU EOM Lebanon 2018
Press and Public Outreach Officer
(+961 8131 4565)
www.eueom-lebanon2018.eu