

Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections Observation Mission of 2018 Parliamentary Elections

Preliminary Report Summary

After nine long years, Lebanese citizens finally headed to the polling stations on Sunday May 6, 2018. LADE conducted a comprehensive observation mission for the 2018 parliamentary elections to assess the freedom, fairness and transparency of the elections in light of the reforms introduced in the electoral law. **Over 1,300 observers deployed across the country to monitor centers, stations, and the vote count.**

LADE used a **statistically-based observation** methodology to monitor the electoral process at the levels of polling centers and stations, adopting a random sample of 10% of all polling centers. Additionally, **LADE's mobile observer teams covered all polling centers across the country**, monitoring the health of the democratic process and extent of implementation of the law, documenting violations and critical incidents.

LADE's 375 fixed observers successfully collected and reported data across **98.4%** of the statistical sample. Fixed observers sent in seven reports throughout the day, assessing the electoral process and environment around polling centers. Another 770 mobile observers traveled between the remaining polling centers, documenting over **3,600 critical incidents**. Another 200 more observers monitored the counting of ballots in the electoral commission offices.

LADE issued two Arabic-language reports during E-Day, continuously published updates and reports on major violations on social media, and issued a third Arabic-language report at a press conference at noon on Monday May 7.

This report presents an overview of main trends observed as well as initial analysis of statistical data at both center and station level. LADE will be issuing a more detailed report to the public, the relevant authorities, and the international community in the coming weeks.

Major trends in observed violations

Secrecy of the ballot. Widespread violations of Article 95, Section 4, of the electoral law (secrecy of the ballot) and Article 96, Section 1 (provisions for people with special needs to cast ballots). LADE recorded across all Lebanese areas list representatives accompanying a large number of voters behind the voting screens, under the excuse of illiteracy or disability. While those needs were not verified, nor were these incidents recorded in the reports of electoral administrators. We consider this a significant and clear violation of the secrecy of the vote, and constituting pressure on voters at voting stations and behind screens. LADE considers that the Ministry of Interior (MoI) and the electoral polling system administrators bear full responsibility for ensuring adherence to this article.

Electoral silence. Common disregard for electoral silence by candidates and politicians, from the president of the republic to a number of candidates and media outlets, in direct violation of Article 77 and 78 of the electoral law requesting electoral silence starting Friday at midnight. The Supervisory Commission for Elections (SCE) issued contradictory clarifications: the head of the SCE affirmed that the period of the electoral silence applied to candidates as well as media outlets, while the secretary of the SCE issued a clarification allowing press statements during E-Day, if they do not include a direct call for voters to vote. This invalidates the need for a period of electoral silence as it is considered electoral campaigning; statements by candidates will affect the choices of voters, defeating the purpose of electoral silence.

Violence. Documentation of several incidents of violence in Chouifat (electoral administrator attacked by list representatives and ballot box destroyed), Bint Jbeil (attack on candidate representative), Byblos (fistfight inside a polling station), and Zahle (fights).

Continued pressure on voters. Representatives from the parties' electoral machines went with voters into the polling centers, pursued them into stations and urged voters to vote for their lists.

Disability access. Most centers were not properly equipped to receive special needs voters.

Ink. The voting ink was easily removable from voter's thumbs.

Screens and secrecy. In many polling stations, screens were not positioned well enough to ensure secrecy of the ballot.

Closing of polling centers. Article 97, Section 44/2017 of the electoral law stipulates that if voters are in the polling station after the official time of the end of voting, they are allowed to cast their ballot. However, the interior minister issued a ruling towards the end of election day stating that the area around the polling station should be considered as part of the station for purposes of implementing this article. LADE rejects this ruling, and sees it as a way to increase the duration of the election in certain districts. Extending the time that poll stations were kept open is a violation of Article 87 of the electoral law, and also spurred an increase in party pressure on people to cast last-minute ballots. The ruling was particularly problematic in polling stations with no outside courtyard or defined boundaries. In many villages in Baalbek-Hermel, for example, it extended voting time for hours. LADE believes that the Ministry of Interior, once it witnessed the surge in voter turnout in the afternoon, would have been better served by giving instructions to the election administrators to increase the number of booths inside the voting stations.

Counting chaos. There was chaos in receiving the envelopes containing the votes of expatriates to the Supreme Committee for Elections (SCE), where they count the results. Meanwhile, some of the boxes that included the ballots of voters inside Lebanon were received late to the higher council, some of the boxes were not received at all, and some were received without the minutes that should have been attached to them.

Post-count violence. Intense celebratory gunfire in areas such as Baalbek-Hermel, Tripoli, Minieh-Danniyeh, Saida-Jezzine after counting of ballots had been completed in stations and as counting resumed at district level commissions. Several injuries and one death were confirmed.

Harassment. LADE observers documented several complaints of harassment against girls by party representatives, election officials, and ISF officers.

Communication with the Mol and the SCE

LADE communicated critical violations reported by observers to the Mol through the latter's hotline, and the Mol worked to follow up on those violations. After repeated and extensive violations of candidates' representatives going behind screens with voters, thus violating the secrecy of their vote, under the excuse of voters' 'special needs', LADE requested the Ministry publish a directive to electoral administrators to verify needs and be stricter on this issue. However, the Mol failed to issue any directive because the Minister was unavailable to approve it.

Furthermore, LADE did not see any actual procedures taken or announced publicly by the SCE to deter the recurrent and persistent violation of the period of electoral silence by candidates and the media.

Violations reported by candidates

Ziad Aswad. Reported a fake Twitter account set up in his name, engaging in defamatory speech and statements insulting of voters.

Rima Hmayed. At the Sarbeen Public School in Bint Jbeil, the candidate's representative was assaulted by candidates of the Amal and Wafa' list (Hezbollah and Amal Movement).

Yehya Mawloud. Candidate's representatives did not receive their passes except after persistent follow-up with the governor's office and threatening to object in the media.

Siham Antoun. Reported the arrival of some envelopes containing ballots unsealed and without security accompaniment to the district counting centers in Baalback, and objected to the way two ballot boxes had been counted.



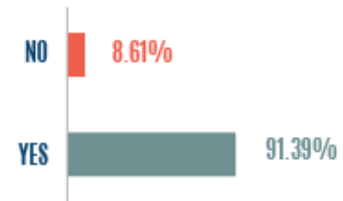
Observations and violations documented at the level of polling stations

Opening Procedures

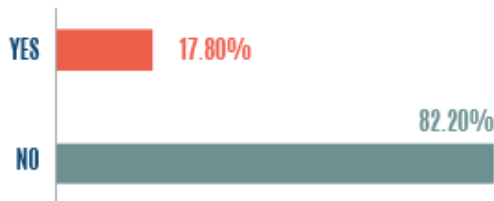
Did the positioning of the screen guarantee secrecy of the vote?



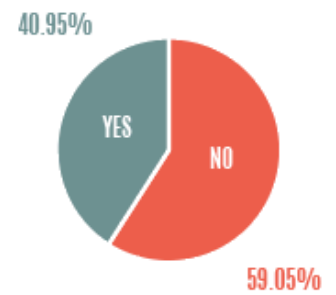
Were Polling Stations Fully Equipped At The Time Of Opening? (Screen, Transparent Ballot Box, Pre-printed Ballots, Ink, Envelopes, Voter Lists, Etc.)



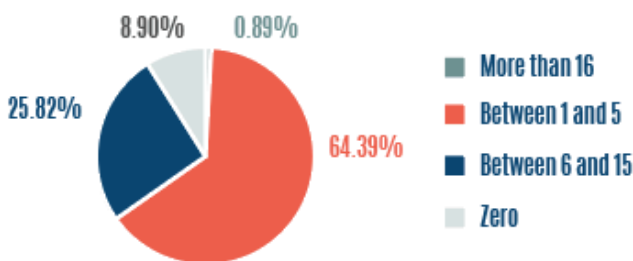
Were there campaigning materials inside polling stations?



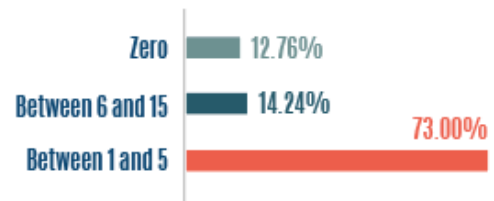
Is the polling station equipped to receive voters with disabilities?



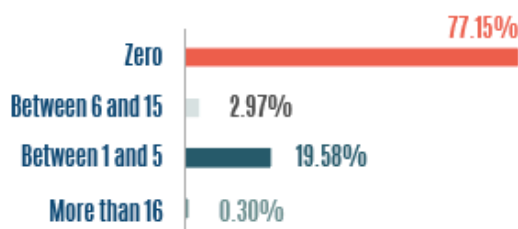
Number of female candidate representatives



Number of male candidate representatives



Number of female ISF officers outside polling stations



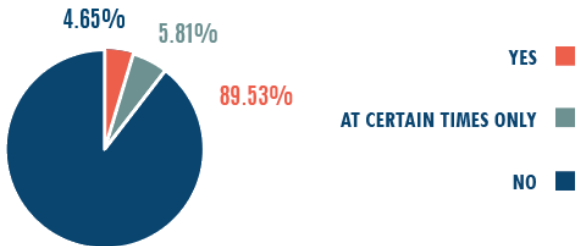
*All data at station-level is proportional to the sample, while data at center-level is nationally representative.



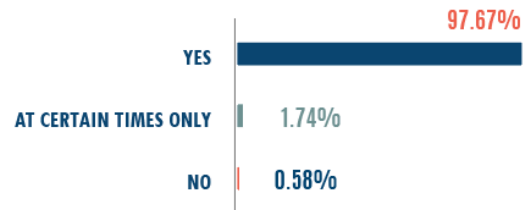
Observations and violations documented at the level of polling centers

Voting Procedures

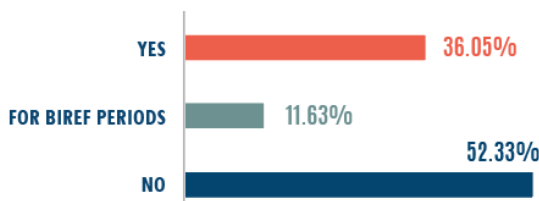
Are ISF officers checking citizen's ID at the entrances of the polling centre?



Were there ISF officers around the polling centre?



Did any campaigning take place in the vicinity of the polling centre?



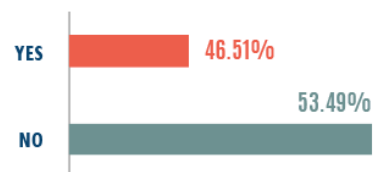
Did any campaigning take place inside the polling centre?



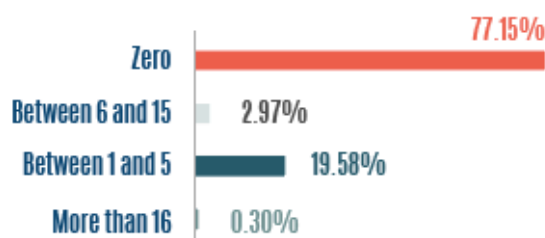
Was the polling centre equipped to receive electoral administrators and candidate representatives?



Was there chaos inside or in the vicinity of the polling centre?



Number of female ISF officers outside polling stations



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