



Beirut, August 11, 2021

## **Despite the crises, elections on time as a tool for accountability!**

The Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE), the Lebanese Transparency Association-No Corruption (LTA), the Lebanese Union for People with Physical Disabilities (LUPD), and Maharat Foundation convened today with the aim of launching the Electoral Reform Coalition less than a year before the parliamentary and municipal elections in Lebanon.

Considering all the crises we are facing at present, elections are a right enshrined in the constitution and the laws, and a tool for accountability that should not be neglected. We meet today to announce that the Coalition is very wary of the possibility of the disruption of the entire electoral process, due to the indifference of the political authority vi-a-vis the elections and their disregard of the legal and constitutional deadlines. This is evidenced in the following:

### ▪ **By-Elections:**

By-elections to fill 10 vacant seats are still pending (with the death of MP Mustafa Al-Husseini on July 28, 2021, the number of vacant seats has become 11). They require the Council of Ministers and the President to sign a decree calling on the electorate as well as the allocation of the necessary funds to conduct elections in accordance with the Constitution.

### ▪ **The Supervisory Commission for Elections:**

The mandate of the Supervisory Commission for Elections ended six months after the completion date of the general parliamentary elections in 2018 without the appointment of new members by the Council of Ministers one month prior to end of the mandate as stipulated in Article 11 of Election Law 44/2017.

▪ **The Election Law:**

Article 84 of the current law stipulates that the Government shall take the necessary measures to approve the use of the electronic magnetic card and submit to the Parliament the necessary amendments to the law.

Article 112 of the current Election Law stipulates allocating 6 seats in the Parliament for non-residents, equally divided between Christians and Muslims, bringing the number of members of parliament to 134 deputies.

Therefore, in view of this reality with less than a year before the parliamentary elections in 2022, the Coalition demands:

1. The issuance of a decree by the Council of Ministers, be it a caretaker government or any government that will be formed, appointing a new Supervisory Commission for Elections as stipulated in Article 11 of the Election Law, by adopting transparent and well-defined criteria for the parties concerned with naming the Commission or having the Council of Ministers appoint the Commission members before October of this year and allocate and disburse the necessary funds for it to carry out the tasks referred to in the law. In the event that a government is not formed, and the decree is not issued by the caretaker government, a budget must be allocated to the current Commission to carry out its tasks, especially in terms of monitoring electoral spending and electoral media and advertising, given that the functions of the Commission are permanent according to the law.
2. The Parliament to meet immediately and amend the Election Law articles on the electronic magnetic card, voting in the place of residence, and allocating 6 seats for non-residents, meaning Articles 84 and 112 together with Article 122 of the Election Law or issue a decree by the Council of Ministers regarding the aforementioned articles. The Parliament must also reconsider Chapter Five of the Election Law on campaign financing and spending, mainly in terms of calculating electoral spending in proportion to the deterioration of the national currency, in order to maintain fair competition between candidates; or issue a decree by the Council of Ministers on Article 61 of the



law to reconsider the spending limit of candidates based on the proposal of the Minister of Interior and following the opinion of the Supervisory Body, by adopting transparent and well-defined criteria to amend the electoral spending limit so as to maintain fair competition among the candidates.

3. The Coalition demands the Supervisory Commission for Elections, currently in place by law, to demand the concerned official authorities, mainly the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the present caretaker government, to carry out their duties towards the Commission and uphold the 2022 elections. The current Commission is required to protect the 2022 elections from any possible delay.
4. The Coalition calls on the caretaker government to assume its responsibilities in the event that a government is not formed, to call for a meeting of the Council of Ministers to take the necessary steps to uphold and organize the elections on time given the crises the country is going through. Their failure to perform their duties is considered an unwillingness to assume responsibility for running the basic affairs of the country and preparing for a democratic and momentous milestone.
5. The Coalition demands the state, represented by the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, to abide by the standards that make polling stations inclusive and accessible to all marginalized social groups, particularly persons with disabilities. To achieve this, the Ministry must immediately begin, without any delay, the implementation of these standards in preparation for the upcoming parliamentary elections and to ensure the provision of inclusive centers for all voters without discrimination. Any failure to do so, shall be considered as a deliberate insistence on the part of the concerned authorities in the state to violate our civil and political rights, which are supposed to be protected by the Constitution, the Lebanese law and all other international treaties and agreements.

The Coalition is closely following the upcoming elections in 2022 and has developed a plan of action that includes meetings with official authorities, parties, and the



Supervisory Commission for Elections, as well as meetings with political groups and citizens, to apprise them of the 2022 elections monitoring process.