

# Over 1,000 candidates register for Lebanese elections

Author:

Wed, 2022-03-16 21:25

BEIRUT: The final number of candidates who will run for the May 15 Lebanese parliamentary elections is 1,043. The final total includes 155 women, 15 percent of the registered candidates.

This is the highest number of candidates in Lebanese political history, with the number of candidates for one seat exceeding expectations in some electoral districts.

In 2018, 976 candidates registered, including 111 women.

The battle is being fought between the parties in power and the civil movement that accuses the authorities of corruption while opposing armed militias and what they call the Iranian occupation of Lebanon.

The elected majority will form the new parliament that will elect the president who will rule the country in October. Opposition parties are hoping for urgent presidential reform after the reign of Michel Aoun, which has been filled with rivalries, political disputes and economic meltdown.

Candidates can finalize the electoral lists for each district until April 4, with the deadline for those who decide to withdraw their candidacy falling on March 30. They will not be permitted to withdraw their \$1,500 deposit.

The number of candidates expected to run on election day is anticipated to be halved due to the inability of everyone to join lists.

Lebanese Interior Minister Bassam Mawlawi said: "As the government promised, it is ready to hold the elections, and citizens must go to cast their votes, following their interests in a real homeland."

He called on the local and international community to participate in monitoring the polls to "ensure their transparency and integrity and the total impartiality of the government."

He said there are no "logistical obstacles" and that the government is working toward fulfilling all electoral needs.

The current candidates are distinguished by the strong presence of lawyers, most notably the previous head of the Beirut Bar Association Melhem Khalaf, one of the activists in the civil movement, in addition to several media professionals.

Tony Francis, a political analyst, told Arab News that the rise of the number of candidates is not surprising. "The political powers are diverse, as some are traditional and want to maintain their seats, while others have emerged

from the civil society.”

According to Francis, it is likely that the number of candidates will reduce by half, especially in the districts where competition is high and candidates are unable to agree on the lists, most notably in the Beirut districts and in Mount Lebanon, northern areas and Bekaa districts.

He said the Shiite Hezbollah and Amal Movement groups have decided their candidates in the influential regions and that their competition is ineffective in principle.

Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah said the next electoral battle is the “battle of our allies.” He added that the presence of Hezbollah “in the government and parliament is necessary to protect the resistance.”

He said: “We aim to win and these elections are decisive and some of the most important and dangerous political battles.

“The alternative to the elections is the absence of a parliament. Therefore, we must deal seriously with the elections and work on increasing the voter turnout, even if that requires visiting people at their homes rather than public meetings.”

Francis said: “The determination of the parties in power to nominate the same people who were MPs while some of them are accused in the Beirut port blast case and some accused of financial irregularities, is disrespectful to people.”

He expressed fear that if Hezbollah and the Free Patriotic Movement felt, even minutes before the election date, that the existing balance in the parliament would not be in their favor, they would certainly cancel the elections.

MP Anwar Al-Khalil, 84, part of the Amal Movement led by Nabih Berri, said the current electoral law is “the worst law in the history of Lebanon.”

He said he will not run for the elections due to his dedication to implementing the provisions of the constitution under the Taif Agreement.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Lebanese elections](#)

[Bassam Mawlawi](#)

Lebanon PM Mikati says he will not run in May parliamentary election  
Lebanon's Fransabank closes all branches after judicial order, source says

---

## [World powers pledge financial support for Yemen at UN event](#)

Wed, 2022-03-16 19:16

LONDON: A UN special pledging event for the humanitarian crisis in Yemen has seen world powers pledge more financial support for the country and condemn the Iran-backed Houthi militia for its attacks against Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

Opening the event, which was attended by Arab News and co-hosted by Sweden and Switzerland, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said: "Yemen may have receded from the headlines, but the human suffering has not relented. For seven years and counting, the Yemeni people have been confronting death,

destruction, displacement, starvation, terror, division and destitution on a massive scale.

“Tens of thousands of civilians, including at least 10,000 children, have died. For millions of internally displaced people, life is a daily struggle for survival. The economy has reached new depths of despair.”

Guterres added: “The war in Ukraine will only make all of that even worse with skyrocketing prices for food, fuel and other essentials.”

The EU Commission committed \$172 million to the funding pledge, the largest funding amount from Brussels to Yemen since the start of the conflict.

Yemeni Prime Minister Maeen Abdulmalik Saeed said his people can “no longer tolerate” the situation, with stifling economic and humanitarian crises causing the “window of hope” to close.

He added that life-saving UN aid has prevented the country from “slipping into famine,” and that any reductions in funding would increase pressures and challenges facing the Yemeni people.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said: “I hope that each of us takes a minute ... and tries to put ourselves into their (Yemenis’) shoes ... and maybe think about what that means and maybe find some additional motivation for action.”

He added that it is “particularly difficult” to support Yemen when “the spotlight moves elsewhere.”

Describing the “dire time” for the country, he said 17 million Yemenis need food assistance, and that figure could rise to 19 million this year.

Blinken detailed the threats of malnutrition and rising humanitarian needs, lamenting the falling support from international partners.

Food rations have been cut, and Blinken urged UN partners to think about how this will affect Yemenis.

He announced \$585 million in new humanitarian aid to Yemen, bringing the total support from the US to \$4.5 billion since the start of the conflict.

Money is important, Blinken said, but more support is needed from the UN and other donors to “step up and do their part.”

He added: “Humanitarian support is one side of the equation. This does not work in the absence of peace. As long as the conflict goes on, so will the humanitarian crisis. In order to really deal with (the humanitarian crisis), we need to resolve the conflict.”

The US condemned “escalating attacks by the Houthis,” including cross-border attacks on Saudi and Emirati civilians. Blinken also condemned attacks on humanitarian staff in Yemen.

UN Special Envoy Angelina Jolie also made an appeal during the pledging event, urging governments to take the opportunity to act and support the Yemeni people.

Dr. Abdullah Al-Rabeeah, supervisor general of the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center, told the conference that Saudi Arabia has provided over \$19 billion in aid to Yemen, and that the Kingdom is committed to achieving peace in its southern neighbor.

“The Kingdom will continue to provide support to Yemen ... in coordination with UN and local partners,” he said.

Last year, countries via the UN donated \$2.3 billion to Yemen’s Humanitarian Response Plan.

This support meant that some 12 million people received life-saving assistance every month in 2021.

The updated Humanitarian Response Plan includes “coordinated, well-designed programs” to reach 17.3 million people through \$4.27 billion in aid funding, which the UN hopes to receive during the pledging event.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Yemen](#)

[Houthis](#)

[UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres](#)

[Humanitarian Crisis](#)

Aid to Yemen prevented starvation but more is needed, says UN humanitarian chief  
GCC offers to host peace talks between Yemeni factions, including Houthis, in Riyadh

---

## Libya standoff could lead to parallel governments: UN

Author:

Reuters

ID:

1647442410036978100

Wed, 2022-03-16 17:56

NEW YORK: Libya is facing a new phase of political polarization that risks dividing its institutions once again and reversing the gains achieved over the past two years, the UN undersecretary-general for peacebuilding and political affairs warned on Wednesday.

Rosemary Dicarlo asked Security Council members to convey to Libyan parties the UN's conviction that credible, transparent and inclusive elections are the only solution to the stalemate.

She also called on Libyan leaders to demonstrate responsibility and remain united behind UN efforts to assist the North African country on its path to peace and stability.

"We know from experience what unilateral actions, divided government and an unending transition may hold in store for Libya," said Dicarlo, who was briefing the council on the latest developments in the country.

Political turmoil has again engulfed Libya after the failure to hold presidential elections that were scheduled to take place on Dec. 24 and were meant to be followed by parliamentary elections a few weeks later.

The elections were postponed due to controversy over electoral laws, including the voting timetable, the eligibility of the main candidates, and the eventual powers of the next president and Parliament.

The current division is the result of the establishment of a rival government to the Government of National Unity following the appointment by the House of Representatives last month of former Interior Minister Fathi Bashagha as interim prime minister to replace incumbent Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah, who was elected in 2021 by the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum to head the interim GNU.

The HOR cited Dbeibah's failure to hold the elections, but the latter has challenged the legitimacy of Bashagha and vowed to stay in his post and continue to steer the country toward elections, which are now slated for June 2022. But Bashagha's government was further cemented by the HOR's March 1 vote of confidence in his Cabinet.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, however, said the vote of confidence was marred by procedural flaws, a lack of transparency, acts of intimidation and threats of violence against members of the chamber and their families

prior to the session. Dicarlo said: "These shortcomings impacted the credibility of the process."

Stephanie Williams, Guterres's special advisor on Libya, said without elections both the authorities of Tripoli and Tobruk "lack popular legitimacy."

Dicarlo said: "Since the March 1 vote, the situation on the ground has remained relatively calm. However, we have observed increasingly threatening rhetoric, growing political tensions and divided loyalties among the armed groups in western Libya."

She added that the GNU leadership "has rejected the legitimacy of the vote, stating that they will only transfer power to an elected government. Mr. Bashagha, meanwhile, insists he is heading the legitimate government." Russia is the only UN Security Council member to have openly supported Bashagha's appointment.

UNSC members France, the UK and the US reiterated that any disagreement on the future of the political process must be resolved without resorting to violence, and expressed support for UN mediation efforts through Williams. Council members also voiced concerns over the tense security situation in Libya after pro-Bashagha forces had deployed in recent weeks on the edges of Tripoli, prompting the UN mission in the country to warn against any escalation.

But Bashagha's office said early Friday that the groups had "opted not to use arms, and to return to their bases."

Council members called for calm and stability across the country, and reiterated their calls for the immediate and simultaneous withdrawal of foreign fighters and mercenaries in line with the Oct. 23 Berlin ceasefire agreement.

Dicarlo warned that as long as the standoff over executive legitimacy continues, Libya could again see two parallel administrations.

"This could lead to instability and possibly unrest, and deal a severe blow to the prospect of elections," she said, adding that the UN continues to urge both parties to engage in constructive dialogue to resolve the political impasse, and to refrain from unilateral actions that could result in further divisions.

"The UN is exerting significant efforts to resolve this crisis. We aim to bring together Libyan stakeholders to agree on a constitutional basis for the holding of elections as soon as possible," she said, outlining several UN initiatives to bring the parties together.

"We aim to convene a joint committee of members of the House of Representatives and the High State Council with the objective of achieving agreement by both bodies on a constitutional basis that would lead to elections this year," Dicarlo added.

"Our priority is to focus on fulfilling the aspirations of the more than 2.8 million Libyans who have registered to vote. They should be able to choose their leaders through credible, transparent and inclusive elections according to an agreed upon constitutional and legal framework."



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Libya](#)

[UN](#)

[Libyan Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah](#)

Libya armed groups step back after Tripoli escalation Rival Libyan premier says he plans to be in Tripoli in days

---

## [Lebanon's Fransabank closes all branches after judicial order, source says](#)

Author:

Reuters

ID:

1647439920036770400

Wed, 2022-03-16 17:14

BEIRUT: Lebanon's Fransabank on Wednesday closed all of its branches in the country following a judicial order freezing its assets based on a lawsuit filed by a depositor, a Fransabank source told Reuters.

Lebanese banks have frozen most savers out of their hard currency deposits

since a financial meltdown in 2019, but the controls were never formalized in law and have been challenged in courts.

The judicial order required Fransabank to reopen the account of Egyptian depositor Ayad Ibrahim and pay out his deposit in cash, or else the bank's assets would be seized, his lawyer Rami Ollaik said.

The judge who issued the order and Ibrahim could not be reached for comment. The Fransabank source said that following the order the bank would not be able to make any payments, including of salaries, because its assets have been frozen. The bank has roughly 50 branches, the source said.

"We closed because the order is on all the belongings of the bank, including the safes, at the tellers, where you can get the cash. I can't get (cash), and I can't receive," the Fransabank source said.

Fransabank had issued Ibrahim a cheque for the value of his deposit and he was therefore no longer a client, the Fransabank source said, adding that he had signed for the cheque at a notary.

A spokesperson for United For Lebanon, an anti-corruption group that is representing Ibrahim in the case, said he had "signed for the cheque but with reservation."



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Lebanon](#)

[Banks](#)

[meltdown](#)

Lebanon PM Mikati says he will not run in May parliamentary election  
Depositors seek justice from Lebanese banks

---

## [Aid to Yemen prevented starvation but more is needed, says UN humanitarian chief](#)

Tue, 2022-03-15 23:43

NEW YORK: Nearly \$14 billion of international aid donated to Yemen in the past seven years has made an “enormous difference” to the people of the country, according to the UN’s humanitarian chief, Martin Griffiths.

It has helped to prevent mass starvation and stabilized morbidity and mortality rates in the war-ravaged country, he said.

However, he told the Security Council on Tuesday that 75 percent of that “exceptional, extraordinary and generous” sum came from only six donors: the US, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, the UK, Germany and the EU. He thanked all donors and stressed the importance of taking stock of the contributions and the humanitarian benefits in Yemen they have helped to achieve.

“First and foremost ... there has been no mass starvation in Yemen, as we were so often reminded might be coming,” Griffiths said as he called for continued efforts to prevent starvation and famine amid rising food insecurity.

“The country has started down that dark road several times, including early last year, only to be pulled back by timely, well-funded humanitarian action. That is an important success.”

He also stated that the aid effort has helped keep morbidity and mortality rates steady during the conflict.

“In other words, without the level of the response, many more people in Yemen would have fallen sick and many, died,” he said. “That is another critical result. These and other achievements are the result of collective action, not the action of one.”

He was speaking during a meeting of the Security Council to discuss the situation in Yemen ahead of a high-level pledging event for the country on Wednesday that will be co-hosted by Sweden and Switzerland. Aid agencies are seeking almost \$4.3 billion of funding so that they can continue to help more than 17 million Yemenis across the country.

“Tomorrow’s event is not just about the money, though that is hugely important,” said Griffiths. “It is also an opportunity for the international community to show we are not giving up on Yemen, even after all these years and with new crises emerging – and that is a very important message.”

He said that the situation in Yemen continues to represent a “chronic

emergency,” as hunger, disease and “other miseries” rise faster than aid agencies are able to ease them.

“23.4 million people now need some form of assistance,” Griffiths said. “That is three of every four and that is the astonishing figure which is so deeply troubling.

“Among them, 19 million will go hungry and that is an increase of almost 20 per cent since last year. And we believe – and I use these words carefully – that more than 160,000 of these people will face famine-like conditions.”

Despite many international calls for a ceasefire and peace talks to resolve the conflict in Yemen, hostilities persist along nearly 50 front lines, Griffiths said, includes Marib, where a Houthi offensive has continued for two years.

“Last year, hostilities killed or injured more than 2,500 civilians and forced nearly 300,000 people to flee their homes,” he said, adding that 4.3 million people have been displaced in Yemen since 2015.

Yemen imports a third of its wheat supply from Ukraine. The war raging in the latter country after the Russian invasion last month might restrict imports and push up the cost of food, which has already almost doubled in Yemen in the past year, Griffiths said. Fuel shortages are also contributing to rising food prices, he added.

Hans Grundberg, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres’s special envoy for Yemen, told the Security Council that the people of the country have been denied the chance to live in peace for too many years and a concerted joint effort by the international community is needed to break “this never-ending cycle of violence and lay the foundation for a sustainable peace.”

Briefing council members on the latest developments in the security situation, Grundberg said that hostilities continue unabated on many fronts. Among other examples, he highlighted the continuing Houthi offensive in Marib which “has caused enormous harm to civilians” for two years.

“The violence also continues to spill into the region,” he said. “On Feb. 21, shrapnel from a drone intercepted over Jazan city’s King Abdullah Airport wounded 16 civilians.”

The fact remains that there can be no sustainable military solution to the conflict, the envoy said, and “as always, we see civilians paying an unacceptable price for choices they have no influence over.”

UNICEF, the United Nations Children’s Fund, reported this month that at least 47 children were killed or maimed in Yemen during the first two months of this year alone. More than 10,200 children have been confirmed killed or injured in the past seven years, but the actual number is probably much higher, the organization said.

Grundberg also warned that the economic crisis continues to escalate and is likely to get worse. The value of the Yemeni currency has fallen by 20

percent against the dollar in Aden and the surrounding governorates, raising concerns of another sharp decline in the exchange rate, rising prices and a deepening of divisions in the national economy. He called for tangible measures to help stabilize the currency.

Fuel shortages are particularly acute in Houthi-controlled areas, Grundberg said. These shortages, in combination with currency depreciation, will affect civilians even more as households prepare for Ramadan. Yemenis also continue to live with severe restrictions on freedom of movement, he added.

“The closure of Sanaa airport prevents many Yemenis in the north from traveling abroad,” he said. “Ongoing fighting, the proliferation of checkpoints and the closure of access points, especially in Taiz, impede the movement of Yemenis within the country.”

Grundberg said that he aims to explore with various factions the options for immediate deescalation measures that could reduce violence, ease the fuel crisis and improve freedom of movement.

“With Ramadan approaching, I hope the parties will engage swiftly and constructively with my proposals to bring the people of Yemen some much needed hope and relief,” he added.

“In this regard I am looking forward to the opportunity to engage with the leadership of Ansar Allah (the official name for the Houthi movement) in Sanaa on this issue and on how we can move the political process forward.”



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Yemen](#)

[Houthis](#)

[Martin Griffiths](#)

[UN](#)

[Hans Grundberg](#)

[UNICEF](#)

[aid](#)

GCC offers to host peace talks between Yemeni factions, including Houthis, in Riyadh  
Fighting rages outside Yemen's Marib as UN envoy meets leaders