



الجمعية اللبنانية من أجل ديموقراطية الانتخابات  
Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Boutros Draft Law should be the Basis for Urgently Needed Election Reform**

Beirut, Berlin, 7 May 2008 – The current Lebanese election law is not in line with international obligations for elections and needs to be reformed before next year's parliamentary polls (May – July). The reform of the law should be based on the draft election law proposed by the National Commission on Electoral Law under former Foreign Minister Fouad Boutros. This is the conclusion of a comprehensive assessment of the framework for elections in Lebanon which was carried out by Democracy Reporting International (DRI) and the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE).

The holding of parliamentary elections under the current election law would be problematic, because:

- There is no pre-printed official ballot, which seriously undermines the secrecy of the vote, one of the fundamental conditions of any democratic election;
- There are only rudimentary regulations on campaign financing and media conduct, leading to an uneven playing field;
- There is no clear framework for election observation, although observation has become a widespread practice around the globe to increase the transparency of and confidence in elections.

The draft law by the Boutros commission addresses these and a number of other shortcomings of the current election law. Unfortunately, the draft has fallen victim to the blockage of Parliament and has not been seriously debated by the political forces. It is urgent that a debate on the draft law starts. Given the political context, it would be highly problematic if next years' Parliamentary election process was marred by technical shortcomings that could cause the questioning of results.

The Boutros draft also proposes amendments to the electoral system, introducing a cautious element of proportionality. While the DRI/LADE report analyses the effects of these proposed changes, it stresses that the political discussion on changing the electoral system should not overshadow the need for a reform of the way that elections are conducted.

The full report can be found in English and an Arabic summary on:  
[www.democracy-reporting.org](http://www.democracy-reporting.org)  
A full report in Arabic will be available shortly.

DRI/LADE's report is based on an analysis of the legal framework and meetings held with political parties, the government, judges, academics, NGOs and media during a fact-finding visit in late March. The project has been financed by a contribution from the Swiss Federal Department for Foreign Affairs to DRI and a contribution by IFES to LADE.

### **Democracy Reporting International**

is a non-partisan, independent, not-for-profit group of experts. It was registered in March 2006. DRI promotes political participation of citizens, accountability of state bodies and the development of democratic institutions world-wide. DRI analyses, reports and makes recommendations to both the public and policy makers on democratic governance. DRI helps finding local ways of promoting the universal right of citizens to participate in the political life of their country, as enshrined in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. DRI is financed through project contributions and donations. Donations to DRI are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law. For more information on donations, please contact: [donations@democracy-reporting.org](mailto:donations@democracy-reporting.org)

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### **The Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections**

is a non-partisan organisation, established on 13 March 1996 through the efforts of a group of academics, researchers, journalists, lawyers, civil society activists, students and other citizens concerned with election monitoring, proposing electoral reforms and raising voters' awareness.

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