



1101 15th St. NW, Floor 3 | Washington, DC 20009 | 202.350-6700 tel | 202.452-0804 fax | www.ifes.org

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**CONTACT: Richard Chambers in Beirut at rchambers@ifes.org
Karma Ekmekji in Beirut at +961 701 42698**

WORKSHOP PREPARES JOURNALISTS TO COVER ELECTIONS

Beirut, LEBANON – FEBRUARY 5, 2008 – Fifteen Lebanese journalists have an opportunity to increase their knowledge of elections at a training supported by IFES that begins today at the American University of Beirut. ‘How to Cover Elections’ is a four-day workshop run in conjunction with AUB’s Regional External Program.

IFES’ Chief of Party in Beirut Richard Chambers said the training comes at a critical time, with public attention focused on electoral issues including the selection of a new president and calls for reform in the parliamentary election process.

“This kind of workshop provides a timely opportunity for journalists to share best practices and to learn more about what constitutes a democratic election process,” said Chambers, who helped craft the workshop’s curriculum.

While Lebanon has a thriving media environment, some news coverage of previous elections has fallen short of international standards for impartiality and balance. The workshop will cover key aspects of the Lebanese electoral process as well as examine proposed reforms and the expected adoption of a new election law ahead of parliamentary elections in 2009.

Magda Abu-Fadil, director of the Journalism Training Program at AUB, will lead the training sessions. The workshop includes professional skills training to prepare journalists to report on election events, monitor campaigns, conduct interviews and analyze party platforms and opinion polls.

The workshop is part of IFES’ electoral reform project in Lebanon and is funded by the U.S. State Department Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor.

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IFES is an international, nonprofit organization that supports the building of democratic societies.