



International Foundation
for Electoral Systems

Election FAQs: Lebanon

Parliamentary Elections

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Middle East and North Africa

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

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Election Snapshot

- Election Day: May 15, 2022
- Registered voters: 3,744,959 (in-country); 225,114 (out-of-country)
- Polling stations: 7,700
- Seats: 128
- Candidate lists: 103
- Candidates: 718
- Campaign expenditure and donation limits: 150 million Lebanese Pounds (LBP) for lists plus more for candidates

When is Election Day?

On May 15, 2022, Lebanon will hold parliamentary elections. Voting will take place from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. in approximately 7,700 polling stations throughout the country. Expatriate voters will cast their ballots May 6 or May 8, depending on their country of residence. Voting centers have been set up in over 50 countries for expatriate voters.¹

Why are these elections important?

These elections will take place in the midst of one of the worst global economic crises in over 150 years, according to the World Bank.² Lebanon defaulted on its foreign debt in 2020, and its currency has lost over 90 percent of its value, propelling over 78 percent of the population into poverty. The country's liquidity crisis was also impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and an explosion at Beirut's port Aug. 4, 2020, which destroyed large sections of the capital and resulted in billions of dollars in damage. These compounding crises have been exacerbated by government mismanagement and corruption. In response to the deteriorating economic conditions, corruption and government mismanagement, Lebanese citizens have regularly held nationwide protests and demanded elections so a new parliament can implement fiscal, financial, social and governance reforms. Much depends on these elections, including whether the government can prove itself capable of organizing free and fair elections under these difficult circumstances and whether the elected parliament can provide solutions to the country's many issues.

Who are citizens voting for on Election Day?

All 128 parliamentary seats will be up for election in May. There are 718 candidates and 103 lists registered with the Interior Ministry. Only 118 candidates are women.

¹ Including Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Belgium, Benin, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Canada, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Cyprus, Democratic Republic of Congo, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, France, Gabon, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guinea, Hungary, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jordan, Kuwait, Liberia, Luxemburg, Mali, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, Nigeria, Oman, Poland, Qatar, Republic of Congo, Romania, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Togo, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States, and Venezuela.

² <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/lebanon/overview#1>
<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/394741622469174252/pdf/Lebanon-Economic-Monitor-Lebanon-Sinking-to-the-Top-3.pdf>

What is the legal framework for conducting the elections?

Lebanon passed a new election law June 17, 2017 (Law No. 44, Election of Members of Parliament). Article 1 of the law states: “Parliament is composed of 128 deputies elected for four years through a system of proportional representation. Elections shall be organized in one round and based on the principles of universal suffrage and secret ballot.”

What is the electoral system?

Lebanon uses an open list proportional representation electoral system. The country is divided into 15 major and 27 minor districts. The 128 seats of Parliament are distributed across the major districts and, where the major districts are subdivided, across minor districts based on an established, confession-based quota for each of Lebanon’s 18 confessions (Annex 1 of Law No. 44 allocates Parliamentary seats). Voters choose one list and have one preferential vote, which they can cast for a candidate from that list for a seat in the voter’s minor constituency (Article 98 of Law No. 44).

Who is eligible to run as a candidate?

Article 7 of Law No. 44 states that any Lebanese citizen who is at least 25 years old, is a registered voter and has not been prevented from exercising civil and political rights as a punishment for a crime may stand as a candidate in the elections.

Are there reserved seats for women? What is the gender balance within the candidate list?

There is no quota dictating the number of seats reserved for women or as a requirement in the formation of lists. Only 118 of the 718 candidates running for office in this election are women.

What are the campaign expenditure and donation limits?

Article 57 of Law No. 44 defines “campaign contributions” as “[a]ll donations, contributions, gifts in cash or in kind, loans, advance payments, early payments or anything of material value provided for the candidate or candidate list,” no matter how small the amount. A candidate may not receive a greater sum in contributions than his or her election spending limit, and contributions may not be made through an intermediary.

Article 61 states the formulae for calculating the spending limits of candidates and lists:

- A candidate’s limit is the fixed sum of 150 million Lebanese pounds (LBP) plus 5,000 LBP for each voter registered in the voter lists in the major constituency; and
- The spending limit for a list is a fixed sum of 150 million LBP.

By default, Article 62 favors the country’s wealthy and institutionalized status quo political parties. This provision allows institutions to provide welfare services and material support to voters and is not considered a form of clientelism as long as the institution has been open for at least three years before the election.

What is the election management body? What are its powers?

Lebanon's Ministry of Interior and Municipalities (MOIM) is responsible for managing elections. The 2017 electoral law created the Supervisory Commission for Elections (SCE). The mandate of its 11 members is limited to monitoring campaign spending and supervising media compliance with campaign coverage regulations. The MOIM nominates all members of the SCE, who must be approved by Cabinet. The SCE budget also comes from the MOIM. These structural provisions in the 2017 electoral law undermine the capacity of the SCE to function as a politically independent body. SCE members are nominated from a predetermined group of professions by established governmental and nongovernmental nominating bodies (Law No. 44 Article 10, para. [1]). The 11 commissioners include:

- An "honorably retired," long-serving ordinary judge, nominated by the Supreme Judicial Council;
- An "honorably retired," long-serving administrative judge, nominated by the State Council;
- An "honorably retired," long-serving financial judge, nominated by the Court of Auditors;
- A former president of the Beirut Bar Association, nominated by the Beirut Bar Council;
- A former president of the Tripoli Bar Association, nominated by the Tripoli Bar Council;
- A representative of the Press Syndicate, nominated by the Syndicate Council;
- A media and advertising expert, nominated by the National Council for Audiovisual Media;
- A former president of the Association of Certified Public Accountants, nominated by the Association;
- Two election experts nominated by the Minister of Interior and Municipalities; and
- A representative of the civil society organizations (CSOs) eligible under Article 20 of Law No. 44 to observe and monitor the elections, nominated by the CSOs "through a selection procedure decided by the Minister."

Each candidate for SCE membership is selected from among three individuals identified by the nominating body, with the exception of the two election experts nominated by the Minister of Interior and Municipalities, who are selected from among six candidates.

Article 19 of Law No. 44 defines the SCE's specific functions:

1. Issuing decisions and circulars that fall within the framework of its functions and submitting the proposals it deems appropriate to the Minister.
2. Receiving the applications of the broadcast, print and electronic media wishing to participate in covering the voting and counting process; delivering the required permits to such media; and establishing the code of conduct for media coverage.
3. Receiving the applications of the private broadcast and print media wishing to participate in paid electoral advertising in accordance with the provisions of the law.
4. Monitoring the compliance of all candidate lists, candidates and media outlets with the laws and regulations that regulate the electoral competition in accordance with the provisions of the law.

5. Determining the terms and conditions for conducting opinion polls and the dissemination, broadcast or distribution of the results during the campaign; and monitoring compliance with the pre-election silence period.
6. Receiving and auditing the financial statements of the electoral campaigns within one month after Election Day.
7. Receiving each candidate's application for the registration of his or her financial commissioner for the campaign and issuing receipts proving that the application has been filed.
8. Exercising control over campaign spending in accordance with the provisions of the law.
9. Receiving and processing the applications of local and international electoral observers, issuing their permits and establishing a code of conduct for them.
10. Promoting electoral knowledge, guiding voters and encouraging democratic practice by all means available.
11. Receiving and adjudicating complaints of alleged violations in matters related to the functions of the Commission. Where such violations are proven, the Commission may automatically take action and initiate the appropriate measures.
12. Recruiting electoral experts when necessary.

The SCE's decisions are made by an absolute majority of its members and may be appealed to the State Council (Article 21 of Law No. 44).

Who can vote in these elections?

According to Article 3 of Law No. 44, "every resident or non-resident, male or female Lebanese citizen may exercise their right to vote." The law outlines the conditions that a voter must meet in order to be eligible. A voter must have attained the age of 21 and not be disqualified. Article 4 disqualifies persons who:

1. Are under an interdiction of civil rights.
2. Are permanently barred from public office and posts.
3. Are under temporary disqualification from office and post levels, until their re-qualification.
4. Have been convicted of a felony offense.
5. Have been convicted of any of the following major offenses: burglary; fraud; bad credit; embezzlement; bribery; perjury; rape; intimidation; forgery; the use of forged documents; false testimony; crimes against public morals listed in Chapter 7 of the Penal Code; and crimes related to the cultivation, production and trafficking of narcotics.
6. Are placed under judicial interdiction, throughout the duration of the interdiction period.
7. Have been fraudulently declared bankrupt or sentenced to the penalties specified in Articles 689 to 698 of the Penal Code.
8. Are sentenced to the penalties provided for in Articles 329 to 334 of the Penal Code.

Naturalized Lebanese citizens may vote or run for office only 10 years after their naturalization; however, non-Lebanese women who obtain Lebanese citizenship through marriage to a Lebanese male may not vote.

Non-retired military personnel of all ranks and divisions, including the Lebanese Armed Forces, the Internal Security Forces, General Security, State Security, Parliament Police, Customs Police and other similar positions also may not vote.

Voters must register to vote prior to the election. Lebanon's voter registry is based on its civil registry. The Directorate General of Personal Status (DGPS) prepares voter lists for each constituency based on civil status records of the voters who were registered in that constituency for one year before the annual voter update period beginning Oct. 20 (Article 26 of Law No. 44). The Criminal Record Department and the courts must provide the DGPS with the names of those ineligible to vote under Article 4 (Articles 29, 30) of Law No. 44.

How many registered voters are there?

According to the Directorate General of Civil Status there are 3,967,507 registered voters (including 225,114 out-of-country voters), of whom 2,022,387 are women and 1,945,120 are men. Over 600,000 voters are between the ages of 21 and 29 years.³

What provisions are in place that support the equal rights of women, persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups?

Several provisions support the equal rights of women, persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups as both voters and candidates.

Under Article 96 of Law No. 44, voters with special needs "may be assisted by another voter of their choice, under the supervision of the polling station officers" (para. [1]). The Ministry of Interior and Municipalities must also take account of "the needs of people with disabilities when organizing elections and facilitate the procedures allowing them to exercise their right to vote unobstructed" after consulting "specialized associations of people with disabilities" (para. [2]). In addition, the Lebanese Physically Handicapped Union signed an agreement with the Supervisory Commission for Elections to observe the elections.⁴ However, as in past elections, many polling stations may not be accessible to persons with disabilities.⁵

Law No. 44 does not include a women's quota, either as seats reserved for women or as a requirement for the formation of lists. Although the Boutros Commission in 2006 recommended a 30 percent quota for women candidates, this and many of its other recommendations were not included in either the 2008 law or the 2017 law.⁶

³ <https://www.dgcs.gov.lb/arabic/statistics-map>

⁴ <https://elections.gov.lb>

⁵ "Few of the observed polling stations were easily accessible to persons with disabilities, and none were equipped to facilitate their equal and dignified participation. While security officials made serious and commendable efforts to assist persons with limited mobility to reach their polling stations, the general inaccessibility of polling stations discourages their participation in elections. The majority of observers reported that polling stations tended to be located on the second floor or higher, and witnessed security officials or other voters carrying elderly or disabled individuals up flights of stairs in order to cast their vote." National Democratic Institute (2018). *Final Report*, p. 21.

⁶ National Democratic Institute (2009). *Final Report*, p. 15.

Is out-of-country voting allowed?

Yes, out-of-country voting is permitted by Article 112 of Law No. 44. The law stipulates that out-of-country voters can vote for one of six seats reserved for non-resident candidates (equally divided among the Maronite, Orthodox, Catholic, Sunni, Shiite and Druze confessions). However, in October 2021, the Parliament amended the law allowing diaspora voters to vote for the 128 parliamentary seats in Lebanon depending on their constituencies (determined by their places of patrilineal origin).⁷

Article 111 of Law No. 44 allows “any non-resident Lebanese citizen” to vote if his or her name is registered in the personal status records and that voter is not disqualified under Article 4. Non-residents vote at polling centers in embassies, consulates “or other places specified by the Ministry,” which this year includes churches, Islamic centers, mosques and schools. Eligible non-residents register at the embassy or consulate of their choice before Nov. 20 in the year before parliamentary elections, “either in person, or by virtue of a duly signed and authenticated letter, or through electronic registration if available,” and “provide specified information such as ID card number, confession and passport number if available” (Article 113). Embassies must send registration lists to the Directorate General of Personal Status before Dec. 20 (Article 113; cf. Article 34, para. [3]), which verifies the names and prepares separate voter lists for each embassy or consulate, with a minimum of 200 names per voting center (Article 114). The voters’ names are marked in the personal status register as out-of-country voters to prevent them from voting in Lebanon.

For more information, see [this guide](#).

Who can observe during Election Day? How can they get accreditation?

Paragraph (a) of Article 20 of Law No. 44 sets the criteria for domestic civil society organizations (CSOs) to be accredited by the Supervisory Commission for Elections to “observe the elections and monitor their progress.” The law provides that such a domestic CSO must:

- Be non-political and have proof of registration issued at least two years before the submission of the application to the Commission;
- Neither be associated with any political side or party nor have in its general or administrative body any candidate standing for elections;
- Have in its statutes, at least in the past two years, objectives related to democracy, human rights, elections, transparency or a training component related thereto;
- Declare its funding sources to the commission;
- Submit to the Commission the closing balance of its dedicated account for election observation activities not later than one month after the end of the electoral process;

⁷ <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1278893/what-lies-behind-parliaments-decision-to-allow-expats-to-vote-for-all-128-mps.html>

- Have duly deposited with the competent official authorities at the date of submission of the application a list of at least 100 members affiliated with the organization in accordance with the regulations; and
- Have its administrative board comply with the code of ethics established by the commission.

For international observers, the law states only that “The Commission shall look into the applications of international elections organizations wishing to observe the electoral process in accordance with the terms and conditions established by the Commission at least one month prior to Election Day” (Article 20, para. [b]). The European Union has deployed an observation mission for this election; in mid-April, 30 long-term observers arrived in Lebanon. They will be joined by 40 short-term observers around Election Day to observe the polling, voting and counting. Some of the EU observers will also cover the out-of-country voting in a number of countries where there is a significant presence of the Lebanese diaspora.⁸

On Election Day, the head election officers at polling stations may not prevent observers or candidates and their agents from “exercising the right to monitor the electoral process” and cannot remove candidates or list agents from the polling station unless they have been disrupting the process despite having been warned (Article 86, para. [5] of Law No. 44). Such an incident must be recorded in writing and reported immediately to the appropriate registration committee (para. [6]).

What role does the media have in electoral processes, and under what parameters can the media participate in them?

Law No. 44 envisions an important role for the media in covering the elections. For example, Article 33 states that, through audio-visual and print media, the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities will announce that voter lists are ready and invite voters to view them. Likewise, media outlets may cover the voting and counting processes (Article 80). In addition, both public and private media organizations may cover campaigning and the elections and run advertisements; however, they are subject to close regulation by the Supervisory Commission for Elections (SCE) to ensure balanced coverage and equitable visibility for all candidates. Indeed, Article 72 makes the SCE responsible for ensuring respect for freedom of expression, “fair, balanced and impartial treatment for all candidates and candidate lists” (para. [2]) and “equal media visibility” for all candidates and lists (para. [4]).

Articles 68-83 detail the regulations governing the media’s coverage of electoral processes and political advertising. Article 73 sets out the obligations of public media outlets, including a requirement to carry election platforms free of charge according to a schedule prepared by the SCE “to ensure fair and equal opportunities for all candidates and candidate lists” (para. [3]). Public media and their agents and employees must remain neutral between candidates and lists (para. [4]).

⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/news/lebanon-european-union-deploys-election-observation-mission-2022-02-23_en

Private media outlets also have obligations, including:

- Refraining from declaring support for any candidate or list (Article 74, para. [1]);
- Making “a clear distinction between facts on the one hand, and opinions and comments on the other, in their various news bulletins or political programs during the electoral campaign period” (para. [1]); and
- During the election campaign period, refraining from carrying material that could, for example, defame candidates or lists, incite confessional strife, provoke riots, promote terrorism, promise material gain or misrepresent information (para. [2]).⁹

To produce and run election programs and advertising, both candidates and lists and media outlets must adhere to certain requirements. The SCE determines the allowable size for all election advertisements and programs and specifies the times when they can be run (Article 71, para. [b]). Candidates and lists must spread their business across outlets, with no one outlet receiving more than 50 percent of their advertising budget and must include their endorsement of the advertisement in it (Article 71, para. [a.4 and 8]). To run political advertisements, the outlets must notify the SCE at least 10 days before the start of the election campaign period and lodge a price list and advertising schedule with the SCE. The outlets cannot offer free broadcasting and cannot refuse to run an advertisement by any candidate or list (Article 71, para. [a.1 and 5]).¹⁰ During the campaign period, media outlets must provide the SCE with weekly reports of the election advertisements they ran and the fees they charged (Article 71, para. [a.7]). Media outlets must keep copies of all election advertisements and programs for six months after the elections (Article 72, para. [6]). These requirements are intended to ensure fairness and equal visibility for all candidates and lists.

Finally, Article 78 imposes a “pre-election silence period” starting “exactly 24 hours prior to Election Day and until the closing of the ballot boxes,” during which all media outlets are prohibited from broadcasting “any electoral advertisement or live campaigning, except for unavoidable voices and/or images captured in the live coverage of the electoral process.” On Election Day itself, media coverage must be limited to “reporting on the progress of the electoral process.”

Who is managing security on Election Day?

Article 91 of Law No. 44 requires the “security forces” to “maintain order at the entrances and near polling stations,” including enforcing a ban on specified forms of electoral activity and advertising near polling stations. “Security forces” refers to the Lebanese army and police, known as the Internal Security Forces. The head election officer at each polling station is responsible for maintaining order inside the station, and security forces may only be inside temporarily at the request of the head election officer “for the strict purpose of ensuring the integrity of the electoral process” (Article 86, para. [4]).

⁹ These are only examples of the prohibited actions; Para. (2) of Article 74 provides the full list. As drafted, it appears that some of the prohibitions apply only to broadcast media and that the public media outlets are not subject to the same standards.

¹⁰ Para. (2) is limited to broadcasting, while other paragraphs in Article 71 refer to both advertising and broadcasting. It is presumed that a media outlet is entitled to reject a request for advertising and broadcasting in a slot that another list or candidate has already booked.

What is the process for counting, tabulating and certifying results?

Votes are counted and tabulated at three levels. First, the head election officer of the polling station counts the votes and announces the initial results. These results are then verified by the Primary Registration Committee, whose work is reviewed and certified by the Higher Registration Committee. The Minister of Interior and Municipalities announces the final results.

Law No. 44 does not specify a deadline for announcing final results. It does, however, outline the procedures for counting and certifying the election results. This process could last only a few hours or extend for days or weeks, depending on how many manual recounts are required to certify the final results.

After voting concludes, the head election officer of the polling station opens and empties the ballot box. If the number of ballot papers is different from the count of actual voters according to the checklist, the difference is noted in the polling station report. Under the supervision of the candidates or their agents and any accredited observers, the head election officer opens each ballot paper and announces the name of the list and candidate marked by the voter (Article 100).

Once the votes have been counted, the head election officer announces and signs the preliminary results of the votes for each list and for each candidate; provides copies to the candidates and agents on request; and posts a copy at the entrance of the polling station (Article 104). The head election officer then inserts into a special envelope the checklists of voters, the vote tally report and copies of the polling station report signed by all the polling station officers. The head election officer seals the envelope with red wax and then, with an assistant and a security escort, delivers the envelope to the Primary Registration Committee (PRC) office. There, the envelope is opened by the president of the PRC in the presence of candidate representatives (Article 105).¹¹

The PRC counts the votes from each polling station “using the computer software that processes the count automatically” (Article 106, para. [2]). A manual recount is conducted if there is a discrepancy between the computer count and the polling station count (para. [2]). Once the counts for each list and candidate have been verified, all PRC members sign two copies of a report of the results, which is submitted to the Higher Registration Committee (HRC) for the constituency (para. [2]).¹²

The HRC in each constituency verifies the figures provided by the PRCs and corrects any “material and calculation errors” (Article 107). It counts the votes “using computer software designed for this purpose” and notes the final results for the constituency on a report and schedule signed by all members. The HRC then announces in the presence of the candidate or candidate agents the final results, or the number of seats obtained by each list and the names of winning candidates.

¹¹ Unlike the count at the polling station, these articles of the law do not state specifically that observers and media representatives are entitled to be present at this stage or the next one at the HRC. However, Para. (2) of Article 19 and Article 80 refer to the Supervisory Commission for Elections (SCE) function of accrediting media to cover the counting process, and the SCE’s “principles and procedures of election observation and monitoring” referred to in Article 20 may extend that to domestic and international observers.

¹² The law does not require copies of the results to be given to candidate representatives or to be posted at the committee’s premises.

After they have been processed by the HRC, the ballot papers, envelopes and documents from each polling station are delivered to a designated employee of the Directorate General for Political Affairs and Refugees at the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities (MOIM) (Article 106 para. [2]). The MOIM announces the final results and communicates them to the Speaker of Parliament and the Constitutional Council (Article 107).

How will election disputes be adjudicated?

Article 19 of Lebanon's Constitution requires the Constitutional Council (CC) "to arbitrate conflicts that arise from parliamentary and presidential elections," although Law No. 44 does not state the procedures or timeframe for doing so. In past elections, including the 2009 election, appeals could only be lodged up to 30 days from the announcement of the official results by defeated candidates and could only concern the constituency in which they contested. After an appeal was submitted, the president of the CC appointed another CC member to investigate the dispute. The CC member was required to present a report to the president within three months of his appointment, after which the CC had one month to issue its decision. Following this precedent, for the May 15 elections, the issuing of a decision can take up to four months from the time an appeal is lodged. Appeals do not suspend election results or remove Members of Parliament considered elected according to official results unless the CC's determination affirms the appeal. In such a case, the CC may either annul the result and declare the appellant the winner or may order a re-election for the seat.¹³

¹³ EUEOM (2009). *Lebanon, Final Report*, p. 24; see also NDI, *Final Report*, pp. 47-48. The reference in the last paragraph is to a Constitutional Council decision of Dec. 8, 2000, and State Council decisions of July 18 and Aug. 1, 2007. As noted earlier, the 2017 law allows SCE decisions to be appealed to the State Council.

Resources

- Elections.gov.lb
- [Directorate General of Civil Status](#)
- [Election Law 44/2017 on Parliamentary Elections \(Arabic\)](#)
- [Election Law 44/2017 on Parliamentary Elections \(English\)](#)
- [IFES analysis of Election Law 44/2017](#)
- Information Sheet [for the Parliamentary Elections \(Arabic\)](#)

About IFES in Lebanon

In Lebanon, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) worked from 2004-2013 to support electoral reform and improve the conduct of elections. IFES provided technical assistance and trainings to the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities (MOIM) to strengthen the credibility and management of its election administration and supported its voter education strategies. IFES also worked with the MOIM to develop an election violence risk assessment tool – which included a Lebanon-specific assessment methodology and a database to track and analyze violence risk indicators – and integrate the information and analysis into strategic planning for elections in Lebanon. For almost a decade, IFES sought to build the capacity of civil society in Lebanon to effectively advocate for reform on key electoral issues, women’s inclusion in the political process, campaign finance reform and the advancement of the political rights of persons with disabilities.

In 2018, IFES launched the Identify, Interpret and Respond project in partnership with the Lebanese Union for People with Physical Disabilities and the ABAAD Resource Center for Gender Equality, which supports the ability of Lebanese civil society organizations to jointly advocate for meaningful political participation and prevent identity-based political discrimination and violence. The project addresses the intersectional needs of Lebanese individuals with multiple social identities – including gender, disability and religion – by building on partnerships that amplify a diversity of voices.

Disclosure

These FAQs reflect decisions made by the General Assembly of the Parliament of Lebanon as of June 17, 2017 (Election Law 44/2017), to the best of our knowledge. This document does not represent any International Foundation for Electoral Systems policy or technical recommendations.