



The Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE) noted several clashes and violations on Sunday during the third round of municipal elections.

LADE issued a statement in which it noted its observations during the municipal elections in South Lebanon and Nabatiyeh. It had 550 volunteer observers working in the region, including 129 stable observers.

The statement said the elections were relatively calm and regulated with the exception of a few cases of violence, notably in Sidon, where knives and sharp objects were used in certain fights.

“Four people supporting opposing lists were injured and transferred to the hospital,” the statement said.

It also counted two more clashes in Sidon, one of which occurred between the companions of former Sidon MP Osama Saad and a number of voters. Furthermore, a polling station became extremely crowded for 25 minutes as MP Bahia Hariri was hounded by the press after casting her vote.

The association praised the work of the Internal Security Forces (ISF) and the Lebanese Army in maintaining security, as well as the work of the Interior Ministry in preserving stability despite high tensions in Sidon.

LADE mentioned further clashes in its statement, including: a delegate was heard threatening to burn the town of Kfarhata in the qada of Jezzine, LADE observers trying to take photographs of the elections were beaten in Kfardunin, and delegates and voters argued over the distribution of petrol coupons for bribery in Bint Jbeil.

A cameraman from New TV was also beaten in Humin al-Fawqa, where the election process was halted due to violent disagreements.

LADE noted a number of violations such as the presence of wrongly numbered envelopes and the absence of seals in some polling stations.

“In Tyre, certain statements made by delegates were sealed and signed by the qaimaqam but did not show the name of the delegate ... Delegates from the Hizbullah-Amal coalition entered a polling station in Deir al-Qintar holding wireless talking devices, which led to a clash between them and delegates of the opposing list,” the statement added.

In Nabatiyeh, a sheikh called on everyone to vote for a certain list by making an announcement through the minaret of a mosque, while in Marjayoun delegates from opposing lists exchanged charges of bribery. A candidate running for the mukhtar seat in the Dekerman neighborhood in Sidon was said to have confiscated the identity cards of voters.

LADE regretted that many voters were surprised to find candidates winning unopposed after opposing candidates were pressured to withdraw.

“This led to announcing the victory of unopposed lists on the eve or on the day of the elections,” said the statement. LADE had previously warned that such cases could be caused by extending the deadline for withdrawing candidacies.

"The villages of Khalwet, Ibl al-Saqi, Ain Biswar, Jebaa and al-Dweir saw candidates announcing their victory the morning of the elections which confused both voters and polling station officials," the statement added.

Confusion was also noted in Tyre, where a candidate filed an appeal at the State Shura Council after his candidature was refused, but no decision was handed out before the start of the elections.

LADE said the turnout of voters reached 49 percent in general until 3 pm.

It also condemned the poor equipment of polling stations, especially in Nabatiyeh.

The group denounced electoral advertisements and counted 11 cases of distributing flyers in South Lebanon and 23 cases in Nabatiyeh. The association mentioned five cases where security forces were absent from polling stations in Nabatiyeh compared to one case in South Lebanon.

Meanwhile, the Lebanese Transparency Association also issued a statement noting a number of violations.

It regretted that polling stations did not facilitate the voting process for people with special needs and that lists of candidates were distributed to voters.

In Rmeish, votes were reported to have been bought at \$50 each and people voted outside the curtain with the help of polling station officials.

Religious buildings were used as electoral offices in Sidon; certain voters did not sign or cover their fingers with ink in Bint Jbeil, and pens and papers were absent from certain polling stations in both southern regions.

"People talked about a flow of expatriates returning to vote ... a security force interfered for the benefit of a list of candidates in Jezzine," the statement said.

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