



Electoral Reform Consortium: The Parliament Must Give Absolute Priority to Electing a President

The parliament convenes today to discuss the issue of refugees and the position on the package presented by the European Union, following its last session on April 25th, during which it extended the terms of municipal councils for the third consecutive time.

While the parliament oversees and questions the government as part of its fundamental duties within its oversight mandate, this parliament is constitutionally in a state of permanent session to elect a President of the Republic during the presidential vacuum. Therefore, today's meeting should primarily focus on electing a president.

In light of the ongoing presidential vacuum since October 2022, the Electoral Reform Consortium emphasizes the urgent constitutional duty of the parliament to prioritize the election of a new president. However, since the end of former President Michel Aoun's mandate two and a half years ago, the parliament has held seven sessions only to elect a president, with four legislative sessions being convened, two of which were to extend the terms of municipal councils.

This ongoing failure, which affects all levels from local elections to the presidential election, undermines the democratic process in Lebanon and exacerbates the political deadlock, which has become deeply entrenched after the absence of presidential election sessions for the past eleven months. This is despite the escalating crises and the need for an institutional response through an active president, an effective government, and a parliament capable of legislating.

Speaker of the Parliament, Nabih Berri, has announced his intention not to call the parliament to elect a president as long as there is no political consensus. We have witnessed a debate over the legitimacy of legislating during the presidential vacancy under the pretext of "necessary legislation," which lacks standards and is subject to the sole power of the Speaker who sets the agenda.

Therefore, the Electoral Reform Consortium calls on Speaker Nabih Berri to abide by the constitution and make an unconditional open call to elect a president. The Consortium also urges parliamentary blocs and MPs who have boycotted the presidential election sessions to attend and not boycott the electoral sessions again.

Furthermore, the Consortium urges all parliamentary blocs and MPs to prioritize restoring the normal functioning of constitutional institutions and push to accelerate the presidential election process, thereby alleviating the ongoing constitutional and democratic erosion within state institutions.

The Electoral Reform Consortium:

- **Lebanese Union for People with Physical Disabilities - LUPD**
- **Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections - LADE**
- **Transparency International Lebanon - No Corruption**
- **Maharat Foundation**

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