

# Pace of electoral list announcements accelerates in Lebanon as deadline approaches

Author:

Sat, 2022-04-02 22:14

BEIRUT: Parties standing in the May 15 parliamentary elections in Lebanon are hurrying to draw up their candidate lists ahead of the Monday deadline for registration.

Campaigning for the elections is gathering pace as candidates visit their constituents across the country and their rhetoric becomes increasingly inflammatory.

Most of the parties in power have announced their lists and alliances, but the opposition and independent forces are still forming lists and alliances.

A voter in the Baalbek-Hermel constituency told Arab News that "Hezbollah mobilized all its electoral machinery and began touring the voters, wooing them in Beirut and its southern suburbs, in the Bekaa and the south."

The voter added that party delegates "enquire about the number of voters in each house and whether they need transportation to reach the polling booth, and ask them to fill out a specific form to communicate with them."

The voter, who declined to be named, also indicated that Hezbollah's delegates were being challenged during campaigns. They said people were raising queries about how the party had benefited them during the last period of being in power, and that their situation had become worse.

"The same applies to other parties whose electoral machines face losing the voter enthusiasm."

The elections may lead to a change in the balance of power in the new parliament, which will elect the new president to succeed Michel Aoun, whose term ends in October.

Hezbollah had tried to raise the bar of its electoral battle to a higher level to obtain a parliamentary majority.

On Saturday, during a tour of southern villages, the head of Hezbollah's parliamentary bloc, MP Mohammed Raad, accused "the accomplices who are working to sow discord and stir divisions in the ranks of our resistance environment."

MP Wael Abu Faour, of the Democratic Gathering bloc, said that "there is an excessive targeting of the Progressive Socialist Party, and the war against it is almost global."

Addressing his voters in the southern Bekaa region, Abu Faour said: "There is a clear project to create a parliamentary bloc in parliament that supports the forces of the 'March 8 alliance' (Hezbollah and its allies) among (PSP leader) Walid Jumblatt's supporters, and this attempt will fail."

A delegation from the EU made up of technical experts and election observers has been looking at preparations for the elections, as agreed with the Lebanese Election Supervision Commission.

Headed by Deputy Chief Observer Jaroslav Domansky, the delegation held talks with the commission, led by Judge Nadim Abdel-Malik to discuss how they would carry out their work supervising the elections.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Lebanon](#)

[Lebanon parliamentary election](#)

Grand mufti accuses 'corrupt clique' in power of demolishing Lebanon  
Cash-strapped Lebanon struggles to turn lights on for polling day

---

[US sends home Algerian held nearly 20](#)

# years at Guantanamo

Author:

Associated Press

ID:

1648923937560276300

Sat, 2022-04-02 21:28

WASHINGTON : An Algerian man imprisoned at the Guantanamo Bay detention center for nearly 20 years has been released and sent back to his homeland. The Department of Defense announced Saturday that Sufiyan Barhoumi was repatriated with assurances from the Algerian government that he would be treated humanely there and that security measures would be imposed to reduce the risk that he could pose a threat in the future.

The Pentagon did not provide details about those security measures, which could include restrictions on travel.

Barhoumi was captured in Pakistan and taken to the US base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, in 2002. The United States eventually determined he was involved with various extremist groups but was not a member of Al-Qaeda or the Taliban, according to a report by a review board at the prison that approved him for release in 2016.

US authorities attempted to prosecute Barhoumi but the effort fizzled amid legal challenges to the initial version of the military commission system set up under President George W. Bush.

In the final days of Barack Obama's presidency in January 2017, a federal judge in Washington declined to intervene in the Pentagon's decision not to repatriate Barhoumi, whose lawyer said he had expected his client to be released and that the prisoner's family had begun making preparations for his return, including by buying him a car and a small restaurant for him to run. The Justice Department said then-Defense Secretary Ash Carter rejected the release of Barhoumi on Jan. 12, 2017, "based on a variety of substantive concerns, shared by multiple agencies," without going into detail.

The effort to resettle prisoners languished under President Donald Trump. The Biden administration is attempting again to reduce the number of men held at Guantanamo as part of a broader effort to close the facility.

Barhoumi's release brings the total held at the US base in Cuba to 37 men, including 18 who have been deemed eligible for repatriation or resettlement in a third country.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[US](#)

[Algeria](#)

[US Department of Defense](#)

Ex-Guantanamo prisoner prepares for legal battle over British passport

---

## [Guns largely silent in Yemen as factions stick to UN-brokered truce](#)

Sat, 2022-04-02 20:15

RIYADH: Fighting has largely stopped in Yemen's key battlefields as rival factions stick to the UN-brokered humanitarian truce, local military officials told Arab News on Saturday.

The UN's Yemen envoy Hans Grundberg on Friday announced that the Iran-backed Houthis and the internationally recognized government agreed to a two-month truce coming into effect on Saturday, the first day of Ramadan.

The parties agreed to halt ground, air and cross-border strikes, allow oil

tankers to enter Hodeidah seaport, permit flights to depart and land at Sanaa airport, and lift the siege of Taiz.

Local officials said that fighting and shelling between government troops and the Houthis have largely subsided in the central province of Marib and outside the city of Taiz, amid reports that the Houthis are still amassing forces in Marib.

“Fighting has stopped in Marib. There is a limited exchange of mortar and heavy gun fire and the enemy is deploying forces,” a military official who spoke on condition of anonymity told Arab News, adding that army troops and allied tribesmen were bracing for Houthi violations of the truce.

Thousands of combatants and civilians have been killed since early last year in the province of Marib when the Houthis resumed a major offensive to seize control of the energy-rich city of Marib, the Yemeni government’s last bastion in the northern part of the country.

Despite aggressive missile, drone and ground attacks on the city, the Houthis failed to take control of the city and suffered thousands of casualties.

Yemeni experts believe that the Houthis, who have long rejected many similar calls for a truce, were forced into accepting the latest UN-brokered ceasefire after failing to invade Marib.

In the city of Taiz, key battlefields were quiet on Saturday as the Houthis and army troops halted hostilities for the first time in years, but residents called on the Iran-backed militia to immediately lift its stranglehold on the city.

Col. Abdul Basit Al-Baher, a military officer, told Arab News by telephone that government forces stuck to the truce as the Houthis also halted shelling and attacks on the densely populated city. “There is relative calm on all fronts here in Taiz,” Al-Baher said.

The Houthis have laid siege to Taiz, Yemen’s third-largest city, for more than seven years, after failing to take control of the city’s downtown.

They positioned forces on the outskirts of the city, barring people from leaving or crossing into the city, and gunning down those who moved close to their positions.

Al-Baher said the siege should be lifted, in concert with the truce, because it has stifled the city and pushed thousands of people to the brink of famine. “The truce (is) meaningless if the siege of Taiz is not lifted. Siege is a form of warfare,” he said.

“The Houthis blocked Taiz’s roads with large rocks and sandbags and planted a huge number of landmines.” They were targeting all living things, including cats and dogs, he said.





Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Middle East](#)

[Yemen](#)

[Houthis](#)

[UN](#)

Two-month ceasefire agreed in Yemen: UN envoyEgypt welcomes Yemen truce

---

## [1.5m visits to Egypt pavilion at Dubai Expo](#)

Sat, 2022-04-02 18:44

CAIRO: The Egyptian pavilion at Expo Dubai 2020 received 1.5 million visits over six months, and placed in the top-three of two leading competitions over the period, according to the Egyptian Minister of Trade and Industry Nevin Gamea.

The minister said that Egypt won third place among the medium-sized pavilions for its interior design, as adjudged by the International Bureau of Exhibitions. Egypt also won, in a public vote organized by the Exhibitor magazine, second place for its creative work, missing out only to Peru.

Gamea said the Egyptian exhibition was popular because of the country's rich

history, and thanks to its promotion of its tourist industry over the past several years. The presentations included three original Pharaoh statues.

To attract visitors and investors, the country had showcased its heavy investment in infrastructure, including technologically advanced cities and industrial areas, as well as the Suez Canal economic zone.

Ashraf Hamdy, commissioner-general of the Egyptian exhibition, and head of the nation's commercial office in Dubai, said the country had an ideal spot at the event, which was next to the UAE pavilion. This reflected the close relations between the two countries.

He said the events on offer over the period included more than 100 seminars on investment opportunities in information technology and infrastructure, tourism and green tourism strategies, the Suez Canal, the transfer of space technology, the role of young researchers in the field of space science, and the empowerment of women.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Dubai expo 2020](#)

[Expo 2020 Dubai](#)

[Egypt](#)

Egypt pavilion receives more than 50,000 visitors in first week of Expo 2020  
DubaiDubai bids farewell to successful Expo 2020

---

# Ramadan kicks off in much of Middle East amid soaring prices

Author:

By SAMY MAGDY | AP

ID:

1648909623938741600

Sat, 2022-04-02 17:31

CAIRO: The Muslim holy month of Ramadan – when the faithful fast from dawn to dusk – began at sunrise Saturday in much of the Middle East, where Russia's invasion of Ukraine has sent energy and food prices soaring.

The conflict cast a pall over Ramadan, when large gatherings over meals and family celebrations are a tradition. Many in the Southeast Asian nation of Indonesia planned to start observing Sunday, and some Shiites in Lebanon, Iran and Iraq were also marking the start of Ramadan a day later.

Muslims follow a lunar calendar and a moon-sighting methodology can lead to different countries declaring the start of Ramadan a day or two apart.

Muslim-majority nations including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, Sudan and the United Arab Emirates had declared the month would begin Saturday morning.

A Saudi statement Friday was broadcast on the kingdom's state-run Saudi TV and Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the crown prince of Abu Dhabi and de facto leader of the United Arab Emirates, congratulated Muslims on Ramadan's arrival.

Jordan, a predominantly Sunni country, also said the first day of Ramadan would be on Sunday, in a break from following Saudi Arabia. The kingdom said the Islamic religious authority was unable to spot the crescent moon indicating the beginning of the month.

Indonesia's second-largest Islamic group, Muhammadiyah, which counts more than 60 million members, said that according to its astronomical calculations Ramadan begins Saturday. But the country's religious affairs minister had announced Friday that Ramadan would start on Sunday, after Islamic astronomers in the country failed to sight the new moon.

It wasn't the first time the Muhammadiyah has offered a differing opinion on the matter, but most Indonesians – Muslims comprise nearly 90 percent of the country's 270 million people – are expected to follow the government's official date.

Many had hoped for a more cheerful Ramadan after the coronavirus pandemic blocked the world's 2 billion Muslims from many rituals the past two years. With Russia's invasion of Ukraine, however, millions of people in the Middle East are now wondering where their next meals will come from. The skyrocketing prices are affecting people whose lives were already upended by conflict, displacement and poverty from Lebanon, Iraq and Syria to Sudan and Yemen.

Ukraine and Russia account for a third of global wheat and barley exports, which Middle East countries rely on to feed millions of people who subsist on subsidized bread and bargain noodles. They are also top exporters of other



grains and sunflower seed oil used for cooking.

Egypt, the world's largest wheat importer, has received most of its wheat from Russia and Ukraine in recent years. Its currency has now also taken a dive, adding to other pressures driving up prices.

Shoppers in the capital Cairo turned out earlier this week to stock up on groceries and festive decorations, but many had to buy less than last year because of the soaring prices.

Ramadan tradition calls for colorful lanterns and lights strung throughout Cairo's narrow alleys and around mosques. Some people with the means to do so set up tables on the streets to dish up free post-fast Iftar meals for the poor. The practice is known in the Islamic world as "Tables of the Compassionate."

"This could help in this situation," said Rabei Hassan, the muezzin of a mosque in Giza as he bought vegetables and other food from a nearby market. "People are tired of the prices."

Worshippers attended mosque for hours of evening prayers, or "tarawih." On Friday evening, thousands of people packed the Al-Azhar mosque after attendance was banned for the past two years to stem the pandemic.

"They were difficult (times) ... Ramadan without tarawih at the mosque is not Ramadan," said Saeed Abdel-Rahman, a 64-year-old retired teacher as he entered Al-Azhar for prayers.

Soaring prices also exacerbated the woes of Lebanese already facing a major economic crisis. Over the past two years, the currency collapsed and the country's middle class was plunged into poverty. The meltdown has also brought on severe shortages in electricity, fuel and medicine.

In the Gaza Strip, few people were shopping Friday in markets usually packed at this time of year. Merchants said Russia's war on Ukraine has sent prices skyrocketing, alongside the usual challenges, putting a damper on the festive atmosphere that Ramadan usually creates.

The living conditions of the 2.3 million Palestinians in the impoverished coastal territory are tough, compounded by a crippling Israeli-Egyptian blockade since 2007.

Toward the end of Ramadan last year, a deadly 11-day war between Gaza's Hamas rulers and Israel cast a cloud over festivities, including the Eid Al-Fitr holiday that follows the holy month. It was the fourth bruising war with Israel in just over a decade.

In Iraq, the start of Ramadan highlighted widespread frustration over a meteoric rise in food prices, exacerbated in the past month by the war in Ukraine.

Suhaila Assam, a 62-year-old retired teacher and women's rights activist, said she and her retired husband are struggling to survive on their combined pension of \$1,000 a month, with prices of cooking oil, flour and other essentials having more than doubled.

"We, as Iraqis, use cooking oil and flour a lot. Almost in every meal. So how can a family of five members survive?" she asked.

Akeel Sabah, 38, is a flour distributor in the Jamila wholesale market, which supplies all of Baghdad's Rasafa district on the eastern side of the Tigris River with food. He said flour and almost all other foodstuffs are imported, which means distributors have to pay for them in dollars. A ton of flour used to cost \$390. "Today I bought the ton for \$625," he said.

"The currency devaluation a year ago already led to an increase in prices,

but with the ongoing (Ukraine) crisis, prices are skyrocketing. Distributors lost millions,” he said.

In Istanbul, Muslims held the first Ramadan prayers in 88 years in the Hagia Sophia, nearly two years after the iconic former cathedral was converted into a mosque.

Worshippers filled the 6th-century building and the square outside Friday night for tarawih prayers led by Ali Erbas, the government head of religious affairs. Although converted for Islamic use and renamed the Grand Hagia Sophia Mosque in July 2020, COVID-19 restrictions had limited worship at the site.

“After 88 years of separation, the Hagia Sophia Mosque has regained the tarawih prayer,” Erbas said, according to the state-run Anadolu Agency.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Middl east](#)

[fasting](#)

[Russia](#)

[prices](#)

[Ramadan 2022](#)

Muslims in Italy celebrate first post-pandemic Ramadan Charities warn half of British Muslims will struggle to eat during Ramadan