

Declaration Concerning Democratic Practices for Lebanese Political Parties and Movements

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of the Rule of Law And Integrity



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Preamble

Arab countries are facing the challenge of democratization, which has led Arab political parties and movements to deeply re-evaluate their political experience in light of the exigencies of democratization.

The existence of political parties is a precondition in any democracy, however, political action in various Arab countries is hindered to an extreme because it is either prohibited, not recognized, under exceptional constraints, or harassed by the authorities or the ruling parties.

Ignorance of constitutional stipulations and laws, and non-compliance with the legal mechanisms of peaceful circulation of power has resulted in failure to build a stable and viable polity capable of growing in these countries, and reinforced the continuance of illegal practices by authoritarian regimes that marginalized societal involvement in general and political participation in particular. It also contributed in many instances to weakening state institutions, exposing state unity and integrity to grave risks, jeopardizing national and social integration, the malfunctioning of development and participatory programs, and to severe violations of basic human rights, chief among them the freedom of assembly, participation and expression.

The multi-party system represents the rational framework for management of intellectual and political differences among the political parties, and bolsters the building of a vibrant and stable polity where all political parties and movements can partake in power peacefully under a sovereign law. Thus, Arab democratic political parties and movements working to achieve their aims can contribute to reinforcing positive trends in the process of democratization and overcome many of the obstacles that impede this process, mainly the unregulated struggle for power. Compliance of all parties with the principles of democratic practices is the best way to control the intra-party practices and inter-party relationships, and the relationship of political parties with the citizenry and the authority. It also strengthens the status of the parties and makes them a model of practice for ordinary citizens.

In their pursuit of freedom and democracy, political parties and movements that participated in and contributed to preparing this declaration assert that freedom to create political parties and practise political action is the foundation and guarantee of democracy. This declaration is meant to be an ethical confirmation of the principles regulating political practice in the Arab World, based on commitment to pluralism, the rule of law, and respect for human rights. The declaration confirms the following:

First: in terms of Administration of public affairs:

1. Commitment to democracy as a means of achieving decent living conditions for all citizens, regardless of their affiliations, and affording them the political, social, economic and cultural conditions that enable them to enjoy all their rights.
2. Commitment to ensure the political participation of all individuals and groups democratically for the development and betterment of constitutional and legal instruments, with the aim of providing additional guarantees for the rights and freedoms of all provided for in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other relevant international instruments
3. Respect of the principle of the separation of powers, their collaboration and their balance.
4. Complete commitment to the rule of law, and respect for the independence of the judiciary and bolstering its institutions.
5. Commitment to the principles of democracy, particularly freedom, justice, equality, equity, the right to differ, and respect for cultural, religious, social and political pluralism within the framework of a unified society and State.
6. Commitment to political pluralism as a means to express the interests and ambitions of the citizenry.
7. Guarantee of the freedom of peaceful political action and the right to participate in political life.
8. Commitment to the peaceful circulation of power through free and fair periodical elections, to respect the results of such elections, and to honest competition in electoral campaigning.
9. Development of electoral laws that guarantee accurate and fair representation, and equal opportunity, for candidates, to enable the widest representation of all segments of society, and to reinforce national assimilation and social integration in the political life of the state.
10. Adoption of the principles of transparency, accountability and scrutiny in the administration of the public goods.
11. Commitment to the use of peaceful means and democratic dialogue in managing differences and competition among the parties in representative institutions.
12. Avoid resorting to the state of emergency and extraordinary laws
13. Commitment to regulate the financing of political parties through a law with defined standards and controls that guarantees, in a fair and equitable way, funding political parties and electoral campaigns from the public coffers.

14. Commitment to work for protecting public money and to fight all forms of corruption and to abstain from extending any protection to those who practise it.
15. Commitment to support CSOs and reinforce their independence and their role in development as well as their societal and political participation.

Second: The rights of individuals should be based on:

1. Respect human rights and work to make national legislation confirm with the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and respect the right of all individuals, groups and peoples to resist occupation and foreign aggression.
2. Commitment to ensure the right of citizens to: participate in the governance of public affairs, establish and join political parties, abolish any constraints that impede this right to participation, express their opinions, participate in party activities and bodies, and hold office according to the parties' internal bylaws.
3. Commitment to respect the right of every citizen to run for and hold different public offices without discrimination.
4. Commitment to ensure the right of every citizen to choose freely his/her representatives to any national, regional or local representative bodies.
5. Commitment to activate the participation of the citizenry in political and party life, and to protect its political rights and its right to access information and circulate it.

Third: The relationships between political parties should be governed by :

1. Commitment to manage political parties' competition for power through democratic means, away from any type of violence, annihilation or exclusion.
2. Commitment to abstain from using political privileges money in the competition between political parties.
3. Commitment to settle all differences and disagreements between political parties through peaceful procedures and democratic dialogue.
4. Commitment to respect the right of all parties to form political alliances with parties from abroad.

Fourth: Internal organization of political parties should be based on:

1. Commitment to adopt democratic mechanisms for party activities, particularly to carry out periodic elections to select party leaders, bodies and representatives, according to the bylaws of the party in order to guarantee .

2. Commitment to educate party members and supporters in the culture of democracy and human rights, to enhance their capacities in political action and habilitate them to hold leading positions in the party and in state offices.
3. Commitment to encourage internal dialogue and the participation of youth and women in leadership bodies.
4. Commitment to accept joining or quitting the party based on one's own volition.
5. Commitment to sort out internal party differences through peaceful means.
6. Commitment to respect the principles of good governance in all party actions, in managing assets and in disclosing the sources of financing and the way money was used.
7. Commitment to achieve religious, sectarian, ethnic and gender diversification in the party's structure at various regulatory levels, making the core of the party's work the national political program and not programs and activities related to narrow or local affiliations