

Aoun's options are narrowing, and delays are possible.. Lebanon's election law

Aoun had refused to issue the Parliamentary Elections Law, and demanded Parliament to reconsider the timing of the elections, and to amend the issue of the expatriate elections, by creating a dedicated constituency for them consisting of 6 deputies, to be added to the current parliament members.

The bill, which was passed by Parliament and rejected by Aoun, stipulates that expatriates exercise the right to vote to choose the 128 members of Parliament, within the main constituencies in Lebanon, and not within the framework of a special constituency, as was the case in previous elections.

As soon as Aoun's response to the bill reached Parliament, a dispute erupted between Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri and the head of the Free Patriotic Movement, Gebran Bassil. The matter reached a sharp debate and the withdrawal of a pro-Aoun bloc from the session that took place on Thursday, which made it lose its quorum.

The dispute revolved around what Bassil and the deputies of the pro-Aoun movement called a "constitutional violation" during the vote on the item on the expatriate vote, as 61 deputies voted to approve the expatriate vote within the main constituencies in Lebanon, while the "Free Patriotic Movement" bloc voted, and "Hezbollah" and some other deputies in favor of a special department for expatriates of 6 deputies.

The dispute centered on whether the absolute majority to pass the text is half the total number of parliament plus one (i.e. 65 votes), which is the opinion that Basil adhered to, or half the number of deputies without counting the resigned and deceased (i.e. 59 deputies), which is the number On the basis of which Berri decided to vote in favor of the first text.

Bassil described what happened as a "constitutional violation," and Berri replied that the interpretation of the constitution belongs to the House of Representatives, and thus he took the decision to refuse to discuss the items that Aoun objected to in the parliamentary elections law, and sent them to the presidency.

delay risk

In this context, lawyer Paul Morcos, head of the "Justicia" human rights organization, believes that after Parliament responded to the President of the Republic, "the president has no choice in the matter of issuing the law because it will be issued without his will."

Morcos told Al-Ain News, “However, Aoun has the right to challenge the law before the Constitutional Council within 15 days of its publication, and the latter has a deadline of approximately one month as a maximum to rescind the complained law in whole or in part.”

And he continued, “Ten deputies from Aoun’s bloc are also entitled to file an appeal against the law, before the Constitutional Council, calling for its annulment.”

But Marqod said that if the law was challenged, and the Constitutional Council went to invalidate it, and thus returned to the Parliament to amend it, the elections would face the risk of delaying.

polling cost

The Minister of Interior and Municipalities, Bassam Mawlawi, confirmed today, that “the parliamentary elections will be held on time, according to the law approved by the House of Representatives.”

The minister responsible for organizing the elections in terms of logistics pointed out that “the failure to hold the elections on time negatively affects Lebanon’s internal and external image, which is something that it cannot bear.”

He stressed that “the role of the Ministry of Interior and the minister in particular is to manage the electoral process technically and logistically, according to the law issued by the House of Representatives.”

“The cost of the elections is about 10 million US dollars, or a little more than that, which is less than the cost of financing electricity for a week,” he said.

Molloy revealed contacts and meetings he is conducting with United Nations organizations and the European Union “to secure the financing of the electoral administration in a manner that does not affect national sovereignty.”

The minister affirmed his keenness on “the necessity of holding elections before May 21, 2021, the date of the expiration of the current parliament’s mandate,” rejecting any extension of the parliament’s mandate because of its negative repercussions on Lebanon’s image in the international community.

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