

My intervention, on behalf of ALEF and the respective coalitions, reflects two submissions. The first focuses on *Political Rights*, specifically, the right to access information, to free and fair elections, and to democratic participation.

The second covers *Freedom of Religion and Belief*, addressing issues of equal treatment and the restrictions that continue to affect freedom of conscience in Lebanon.

I. Political Rights – Right to Access Information

In 2017, Lebanon adopted a Right to Access Information Law, later amended in 2021. However, implementation remains inconsistent and, in many cases, purely symbolic. Public administrations frequently deny access to documents, often invoking bureaucracy or confidentiality. There are no real sanctions for non-compliance, which leaves the law unenforceable in practice.

The National Anti-Corruption Commission, created in 2020 and operational since 2022, still struggles to ensure respect for its own decisions, since there is no judicial mechanism to enforce them. Transparency therefore remains uneven across ministries.

We recommend that Lebanon:

1. Fully implement the Access to Information Law by appointing trained information officers in every administration and ensuring the proactive publication of key documents.
2. Amend both the Access to Information and Anti-Corruption Commission Laws to include binding penalties for public officials who fail to comply.
3. Establish a centralized online platform publishing ministerial budgets, contracts, and plans, with annual compliance reports from all ministries.

II. Political Rights – Free Vote and Democratic Elections

Serious challenges persist regarding citizens' right to vote freely and fairly. The 2022 parliamentary elections exposed continuing weaknesses in the electoral law. Observers documented extensive vote buying, media bias, and misuse of public resources.

Between 2021 and 2025, repeated postponements of municipal elections deprived citizens of local representation. Although municipal elections were finally held in May 2025, many centers, especially in South Lebanon, were inaccessible due to ongoing Israeli attacks. Women's representation rose slightly to just over 10 percent **compared to the last municipal elections**, but this remains far below expectations.

To restore public trust and democratic legitimacy, we urge Lebanon to:

1. Adopt a comprehensive electoral reform guaranteeing fair representation, realistic spending limits, and transparent vote counting.
2. Create an independent, autonomous, and permanent electoral management body to oversee the process.
3. Introduce mandatory quotas of at least 30 percent for women and 10 percent for youth **in both parliamentary and municipal elections**.

III. Freedom of Religion or Belief – Equal Treatment

Our second submission, prepared by the National Working Group on Freedom of Religion in Lebanon, composed of over 20 organizations and experts, addresses persistent inequalities in the enjoyment of freedom of religion or belief.

Only 18 religious communities are officially recognized and have personal status laws. Unrecognized groups, such as Baha'is, Hindus, and Buddhists and others, continue to face obstacles in marriage registration, inheritance, and political participation. Sectarian-based political representation further limits civic participation, and gender discrimination within personal status laws remains widespread, especially in matters of custody and inheritance.

We call on Lebanon to:

1. Launch a national multi-stakeholder dialogue and publish a clear roadmap for adopting an optional civil personal status law that addresses the exclusion of persons from unrecognized sects and harmonises unequal divorce, custody and inheritance protections.
2. Depoliticize the recognition of religious groups, ensuring the process is transparent and impartial.
3. Reform personal status laws to eliminate discrimination against women and to align with international standards, including CEDAW.

IV. Freedom of Religion and Belief – Restricted Freedoms

Despite constitutional guarantees, individuals still face restrictions on practicing, changing, or expressing their religion or belief. Unrecognized groups cannot register places of worship or conduct marriages, and prisoners, migrants, and refugees encounter barriers to practicing their faith.

Conversion remains socially discouraged and, in some cases, prohibited by religious authorities. Converts risk social exclusion, loss of family ties, inheritance, and employment. There are no state mechanisms to protect them. Moreover, blasphemy and defamation laws continue to restrict journalistic and cultural expression.

We therefore recommend that Lebanon:

1. Impartially enforce Legislative Decree No. 60 and ensure that all individuals—including migrants, refugees, prisoners, and minorities—can practice their religion freely.
2. Establish legal procedures to protect those who wish to convert or remove religious affiliation.
3. Reform blasphemy and religious defamation laws to align with international human rights standards while preventing incitement to violence.
4. Place religious courts under judicial oversight to ensure compliance with human rights obligations.



Lebanon stands today at a critical juncture. Following the presidential elections, the formation of a new government, and the accompanying political consensus, there are heightened expectations for this government to advance long-overdue reforms. These reforms must be grounded in transparency, accountability, and equality. We therefore call on UN Member States to regard the UPR process not merely as a review mechanism, but as a concrete action plan to guide Lebanon's reform agenda through a human rights-based approach, and to closely monitor the government's implementation of its commitments in the coming cycle.

Thank you.