

BREAKING THE DEADLOCK: AN APPEAL TO POLITICAL COMMONSENSE

We hear conflicting parties claiming to represent the cross-sectarian majority of the Lebanese. They also assert that they are proposing reasonable Lebanese solutions whereas others are merely representing other countries' interests.

Paradoxically, those same countries are repeatedly affirming that the Lebanese themselves must achieve a common agreement.

We are enthusiastic about considering their "request" seriously and hereby propose steps that can help solving Lebanon's current stalemate.

Because we believe that students must have a leading role to play in solving crises instead of sparking them or perpetuating them, this proposal is a humble initiative toward breaking the deadlock instead of "waiting for Godot"!!

The proposed initiative deals with two main issues:

- I. The dispute on early parliamentary elections versus presidential elections and unity government**
- II. The international tribunal**

Please note that both issues go in parallel. Furthermore, the sequence of the steps mentioned under each issue is essential, and therefore should not be altered. We hope all parties involved will take this proposal seriously.

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I. Regarding the dispute on early parliamentary elections versus presidential elections and unity government, we propose the following steps:

- 1) All concerned parties agree to amend the Lebanese constitution on the presidential elections:
 - The president is elected by the people (by direct universal suffrage) instead of parliament in a two-ballot majority poll for presidential elections. Such an election will reflect the preferences of the real Lebanese majority and put an end to the dispute concerning who owns it.
 - To be elected from the first ballot, a candidate must obtain an absolute majority of the votes cast. If not, only two candidates may stand in the second ballot: the ones who obtained the greatest number of votes in the first ballot. In the second ballot, the candidate who obtains the majority of the votes cast is elected.
 - The term of the president should be for four years, renewable only once.
- 2) The current Downtown “sit-in” is over; the resigned ministers come back to the government. The government proposes this agreed amendment to the parliament, which convenes to vote on it as well as on reducing the term of the current unconstitutional president.
- 3) A new president is elected by the people.
- 4) Consequently, the government dissolves.
- 5) A national unity government forms with the 19/11 structure.
- 6) The national unity government agrees on a new representative parliamentary electoral law.
- 7) By the time a new representative electoral law is in place, the official constitutional dates for new parliamentary elections will have been reached. These elections take place during their regular, official and constitutional periods.

Constitutionally, it is important for accountability and democratic purposes to have presidential elections during the midterm of the parliament, and parliamentary elections during the midterm of the president. It is also imperative that all parties respect the constitutional institutions and framework in handling their disputes. Furthermore, in parliamentary democracies, the political minority respects the right of the majority to form the government; our suggestion on the government’s 19/11 structure within the sequence of steps is as a compromise given the current situation.

II. Regarding the international tribunal, we propose:

- 1) The parties concerned about politicizing and abusing the tribunal should form a committee to present comments and suggest amendments on it. In addition:
 - A deadline for submitting these comments should be set. All parties have received the draft resolution at least two months ago. By now, parties serious about their concerns should have already prepared their feedback; these parties have adequate expertise to handle this task professionally.
 - Proposed modifications should only reflect concerns about politicizing the tribunal; this is what these parties continuously declare.
 - These parties should publicly declare their comments so that people can judge their intentions accordingly.
- 2) The government should consider these suggestions seriously; this goes in parallel with the end of the sit-in and the return of the resigned ministers, as well as all the steps mentioned above concerning presidential and parliamentary elections.

- If you support this initiative or want to share your feedback, please contact:

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