

48,000 Lebanese flown in to participate in the Parliamentary Elections

The most recent parliamentary elections that took place on Sunday June 7th were distinguished by a phenomenon previously unseen at this magnitude.

One of the most significant characteristics of this election was the transport of Lebanese expatriates in order to get them to participate in the elections by either paying their plane tickets or flying them in organized charter flights to Lebanon. This phenomenon indicates the importance of the elections and intensity of the competition for some districts (Beirut 1st District, Zahle, Saida, Metn, Kesrouan, Jbeil, Koura, Batroun, and West Beqa'a). This time, different electoral campaigns put in place a local and international strategy not limited to the traditional domestic voter transportation to voting stations, but also by bringing people from abroad to vote. The high number of voters supposed to have come from abroad, estimated at 120 thousand by analysts and politicians, would have entailed tremendous costs. This has become a subject of debate and contention between politicians and political parties. However, Information International believes that these numbers are exaggerated and has provided a more reasonable estimate below.

Number of Arrivals 2007-2008-2009

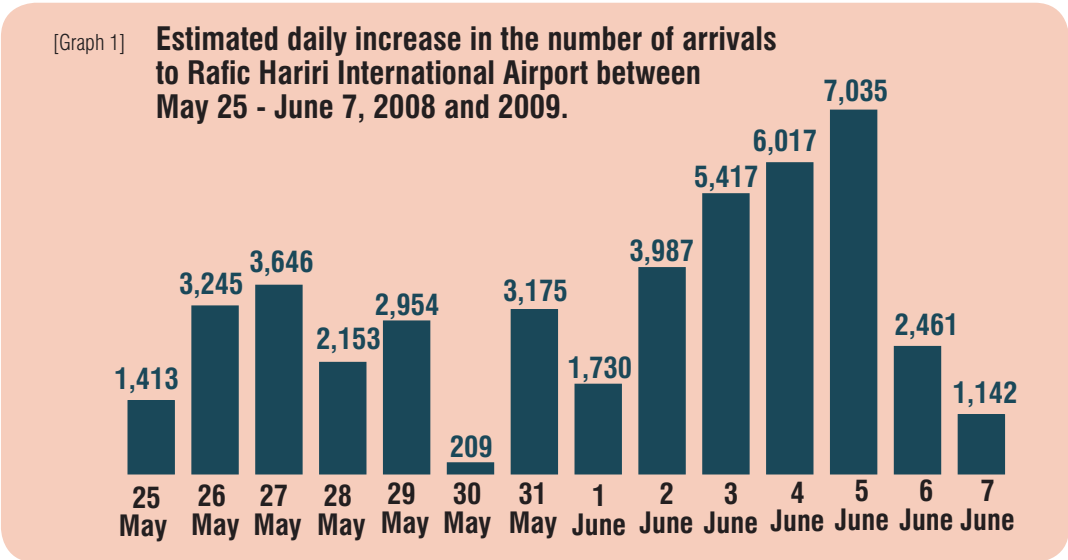
One would logically assume that the two weeks prior to the election (May 25th - June 7th) is the period that would witness the arrival of voters from abroad. Comparing it to the same periods in 2007 and 2008, figures show an increase of 72,022 arrivals compared with 2008 and 44,584 compared with 2007. It is also important to note that the figures on airport traffic for the year 2008 may not be completely reliable

due to the irregularities in travel that occurred from the May 7 incident, which resulted in the closure of the airport until its re-opening on May 22, 2008.

If normal percentage of growth for arrivals during the past two years (estimated to be around 17.5%) is taken into account, it is estimated that the voters coming from abroad should be around 68,056 and 90,163 consecutively, an average of 79,110 arrivals. Furthermore, by making the logical assumption that those who arrived to vote by other means than their own had organized their arrival to coincide with the elections, we estimate their number to be at approximately 42,000. (the difference between 121,319 arrivals during election period in 2009 and 79,110 arrivals who would normally arrive during the same period).

If one further assumed that the number of people who would normally arrive had organized their trips to coincide with the elections (around 6,000 Lebanese), our calculations place the number of people who organized their trips to Lebanon to coincide with the election date is estimated at around 48,000 and not 120,000 as claimed. As such, the influx of arrivals between May 25 and June 7, 2009 is estimated to be around 121,319, both of Lebanese and foreigners. Table 1 and Graph 1 show the daily arrivals to Rafic Hariri International Airport during the two weeks under study compared with 2007, 2008 and 2009.

Graph 1 shows a comparison of the daily increase in the number of arrivals to Rafic Hariri International Airport between May 25- June 7 2008 and 2009.



Daily Arrivals to Rafic Hariri International Airport between May 25 and June 7					Table 1
Day	# of arrivals in 2007	# of arrivals in 2008	# of arrivals in 2009	Increase in # of arrivals 2008-2009	Increase in # of arrivals 2007-2009
May 25	3,179 (estimated)	4,759	6,172	1,413	2,993
May 26	2,715	3,605	6,850	3,245	4,135
May 27	3,647	4,143	7,789	3,646	4,142
May 28	3,010	5,942	8,095	2,153	5,085
May 29	3,065	5,048	8,002	2,954	4,937
May 30	3,983	6,713	6,922	209	2,939
May 31	3,712	4,678	7,853	3,175	4,141
June 1	3,745 (estimated)	6,291	8,021	1,730	4,276
June 2	3,295	4,559	8,546	3,987	5,251
June 3	3,994	5,219	10,636	5,417	6,642
June 4	3,041	7,094	13,111	6,017	10,070
June 5	3,437	5,836	12,871	7,035	9,434
June 6	4,884	7,657	10,118	2,461	5,234
June 7	3,590	5,191	6,333	1,142	2,734
Total	49,297	76,735	121,319	44,584	72,022

Source: General Directorate of Civil Aviation 2009

Countries of Departure to Lebanon

Lebanese citizens that came to vote departed from many Arab, European and American countries (those coming from America arrived by connecting flights through many European countries, which is why their country of origin is unknown). Table number 2 shows the countries with the highest number of departures that arrived in Lebanon between May 25-June 8, 2009.

Countries with the highest number of departures that arrived in Lebanon between May 25-June 8, 2009											Table 2
Passengers travel during May – June 2009	Saudi Arabia	Kuwait	Bahrain	U.A.E.	Qatar	France	Great Britain	Cyprus	Germany	Jordan	Italy
May 25	662	407	114	1,037	449	1,180	124	196	256	791	40
May 26	207	460	221	1,685	121	956	543	87	261	405	306
May 28	578	784	427	1,818	417	1,186	435	168	184	446	231
May 29	696	674	139	1,844	315	1,040	387	227	293	445	232
May 30-31	888	1,090	380	3,028	759	1,577	905	452	1,079	717	572
June 1	930	531	187	1,765	367	1,028	357	194	150	285	396
June 2	486	579	298	2,516	405	728	363	152	630	634	208
June 3	2,347	691	148	1,862	441	1,085	350	192	429	588	81
June 4	1,658	1,022	458	3,182	508	1,022	445	291	427	627	388
June 6-5	2,527	2,257	777	5,883	1,153	2,051	651	754	1,233	1,229	418
June 7	133	430	143	1,183	740	707	463	490	387	258	335
June 8	69	353	202	609	123	484	-	-	-	64	811

Source: General Directorate of Civil Aviation 2009

Graph 2 shows the total number of Lebanese arrivals per country from May 25- June 7, 2009.

Number of Departures from Lebanon

In order to confirm that those who arrived in Lebanon came to participate in the 2009 elections, the number of departures from Lebanon 10 days before and after the elections is also displayed.

When comparing last year's figures with this year's, figures show an increase in the number of departures from Lebanon. The figures also confirm that the 40,000 expatriates who participated in the elections is a realistic as the number of departures from Lebanon reached 46,600 between June 7 – 17, 2008 and reached 68,523 in the same period in 2009. When the population growth is calculated, the number of additional departures from Lebanon reaches 12,000 – 15,000, assuming that a significant number of the arrivals had started their summer vacation in Lebanon earlier to coincide with the election date, thus staying in Lebanon a few extra weeks. These Lebanese were not calculated in the number of departures during the period of our study (table 3 and graphs 3 and 4).

Table 3 displays the daily departures from Rafic Hariri International Airport from May 28- June 17.

Daily Departures from Rafic Hariri International Airport from May 28-June 17.
Table 3

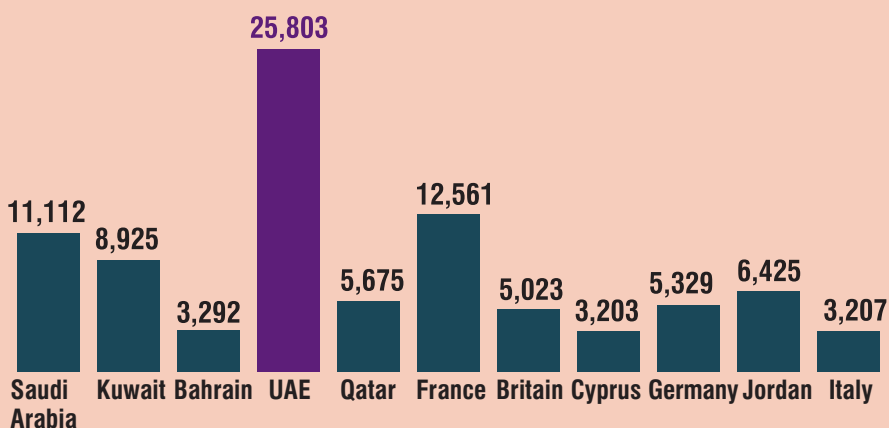
Date	# of departures in 2009	# of departures in 2008
May 28	3,756	3,434
May 29	5,440	3,260
May 30	5,478	3,869
May 31	5,447	4,267
June 1	4,604	4,548
June 2	3,562	3,927
June 3	3,151	3,305
June 4	3,258	3,019
June 5	4,684	3,147
June 6	4,146	3,935
June 7	5,068	4,418
June 8	5,078	4,864
June 9	7,148	4,100
June 10	6,769	3,818
June 11	5,098	3,182
June 12	6,420	3,392
June 13	6,813	4,205
June 14	6,417	4,618
June 15	6,500	5,065
June 16	6,780	4,608
June 17	6,432	4,330
Total	112,049	83,311

Source: General Directorate of Civil Aviation 2009

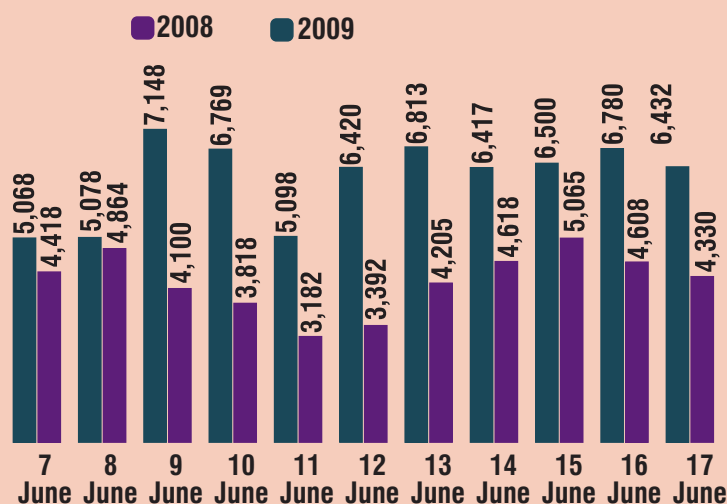
Whether the votes cast by Lebanese that came from abroad made a difference in the results or not, the enormous amounts of money spent were essentially used as a tool of voter enticement based on confessional lines, setting a dangerous new precedent for future elections in Lebanon. It should be noted that in smaller districts such as Zgharta, Koura, Batroun, Kesrouan and Saida, a voter influx proportionate to these numbers could be large enough to tip the scales or, at the very least, slim the margins.

Note: Information International has displayed the methodology used to calculate the estimated number of people that arrived to Lebanon to cast their votes. 48,000 is only an estimate, and could be higher or lower than the actual figure. However, this is more accurate than the 120,000 given to the public and that is currently under debate.

[Graph 2] **Total number of Lebanese arrivals between 25 May - 7 June 2009 by country**



[Graph 3] **Comparison of the daily departures from Rafic Hariri International Airport between June 7-17, 2008 and 2009**



[Graph 4] **Comparison of the daily departures from Rafic Hariri International Airport between May 28 - June 6 and June 7 - June 17, 2009.**

