



NHRC-CPT ¹ Position Statement on Human Rights, Digital Technologies, and the Lebanese Parliamentary Elections of May 2026

1. Introduction

In May 2026, Lebanon will hold parliamentary elections at a critical moment for its democratic governance, institutional resilience, and social cohesion. These elections take place in a context marked by prolonged political and economic crises, weakened public trust in institutions, and heightened vulnerabilities affecting the exercise of fundamental rights and freedoms. At the same time, the electoral environment in Lebanon, as elsewhere, is increasingly shaped by the rapid expansion of digital technologies².

The nature of elections has been significantly transformed by the growing role of digital platforms, in particular social media, in political campaigning, voter engagement, and the dissemination of information. Digital tools are also increasingly used in electoral administration, communication with voters, and election-related data management. While these technologies can enhance participation and access to information, they also pose serious risks to human rights, including freedom of expression, the right to privacy, equality, non-discrimination, and the integrity of the electoral process.

¹ This position statement was prepared by Bassam Al Kantar, Commissioner for International Relations, Media, and Information Technology at the National Human Rights Commission of Lebanon, including the Committee for the Prevention of Torture.

² Nader Dad and Saad Khan, "Reconstructing Elections in a Digital World," *South African Journal of International Affairs* 30, no. 3 (2023): 473–496, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10220461.2023.2265886>.

Recognizing the significance of the Lebanese Parliamentary Elections of May 2026 within this digital context, this position statement is issued to highlight the human rights implications of digital technologies throughout the electoral cycle. As guardians of human rights, Lebanon's National Human Rights Commission acknowledges the unprecedented role that digital technologies play in modern elections. It reaffirms its commitment to guiding, monitoring, and assessing its deployment in a manner that is consistent with international human rights standards and the Paris Principles.

This position statement seeks to contribute to ensuring that the use of digital technologies in the Lebanese electoral process strengthens democratic participation rather than undermines it, and that human rights remain at the core of electoral governance in the digital age.

2. Human rights obligations of duty bearers in elections

States bear the primary responsibility for guaranteeing the full enjoyment of human rights throughout the electoral process. In the context of the Lebanese Parliamentary Elections of May 2026, this responsibility includes ensuring non-discrimination, safeguarding freedom of expression and access to information, protecting the right to privacy, and guaranteeing the rights of all citizens to vote and to stand for election without bias, intimidation, or undue interference. States must also ensure the availability of effective remedies for human rights violations arising at any stage of the electoral cycle.

Given their enhanced mandates and roles during electoral periods, Lebanese state bodies, including electoral management authorities, administrative and judicial bodies, security forces, public administration entities, and relevant oversight and regulatory institutions, including data protection authorities, must exercise heightened vigilance. These institutions should be prepared to take timely, impartial, and effective action to prevent, address, and remedy violations related to elections, including those linked to the use of digital technologies, in order to uphold electoral integrity, fairness, and public trust.

This includes ensuring that any deployment of digital tools in electoral administration, voter communication, data processing, or election-related security measures complies with international human rights standards, is lawful, necessary, and proportionate, and is subject to appropriate oversight and accountability mechanisms.

Moreover, business actors also have a responsibility to respect human rights in the context of elections, in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Companies whose activities touch upon or impact the electoral process, including media companies,

telecommunications providers, social media platforms, search engines, data brokers, and developers or deployers of artificial intelligence systems, should conduct human rights due diligence to identify, prevent, mitigate, and account for adverse human rights impacts associated with their technologies and services during elections.

In particular, technology companies should promote transparency in political advertising and content moderation practices, take meaningful steps to prevent the spread of harmful disinformation and misleading AI-generated content, and ensure that their policies and enforcement mechanisms do not arbitrarily restrict freedom of expression or enable discriminatory or abusive practices. These measures are essential to ensuring that digital technologies contribute to, rather than undermine, the protection of human rights and the integrity of the Lebanese electoral process.

In particular, we highlight the following areas where digital technologies can have serious adverse impacts on the enjoyment of human rights in the context of elections and which therefore demand heightened attention:

Misinformation and disinformation

We stress the importance of effective, proportionate, and rights-respecting responses to the spread of misinformation and disinformation that undermine democratic processes, transparency, and public trust in elections. In the context of the Lebanese Parliamentary Elections of May 2026, the risks associated with false, misleading, or manipulative information are heightened by political polarization, fragile institutional trust, and the extensive use of digital platforms as primary sources of political information.

Particular attention must be paid to the growing use of artificial intelligence in the creation and dissemination of election-related content. AI-generated misinformation and disinformation, including deepfakes, manipulated audio or video, and automated amplification of false narratives, pose serious risks to voters' ability to make informed choices and to the integrity of the electoral process. These risks require heightened vigilance in the period leading up to and during elections.

Measures to counter misinformation and disinformation must, however, fully respect freedom of expression and the right of all individuals to participate in public debate, political dialogue, and electoral campaigning. Responses should be transparent, based on clear legal frameworks, and avoid overbroad or punitive approaches that could result in censorship, arbitrary restrictions, or the silencing of dissenting voices.

Electoral authorities and relevant regulatory bodies should work in coordination with independent institutions, media actors, and digital platforms to promote accurate information, support media and digital literacy, and ensure timely access to reliable election-related information. Technology companies should take proactive steps to identify and mitigate harmful election-related disinformation, including AI-generated content, while ensuring that content moderation practices are fair, accountable, and consistent with international human rights standards.

Hate speech and gender-based violence

Addressing technology-facilitated hate speech and gender-based violence during elections is essential to ensuring a fair, inclusive, and respectful electoral environment. In the context of the Lebanese Parliamentary Elections of May 2026, digital platforms have become key spaces for political debate but are also increasingly used to target individuals and groups through harassment, threats, incitement to violence, and discriminatory speech.

Online hate speech and gender-based violence, including coordinated harassment campaigns, doxxing, sexualized threats, and attacks based on gender, political opinion, religion, or other protected characteristics, have severe consequences for those targeted. Such abuses disproportionately affect women, candidates, journalists, activists, and members of marginalized groups, discouraging their participation in public life, silencing dissenting voices, and reinforcing existing inequalities.

These digital harms undermine democratic participation, distort public debate, and exacerbate polarization, thereby weakening trust in the electoral process. States and relevant authorities must take effective measures to prevent and respond to technology-facilitated hate speech and gender-based violence during elections, while ensuring that any restrictions are lawful, necessary, proportionate, and fully consistent with the right to freedom of expression.

Digital platforms and other relevant business actors should implement robust, transparent, and rights-respecting policies to prevent and address election-related hate speech and gender-based abuse, provide accessible reporting and remedy mechanisms for affected individuals, and ensure that their systems do not amplify harmful or discriminatory content. Particular attention should be given to protecting women and marginalized groups so that they can participate in electoral processes safely and on an equal basis.

Artificial Intelligence

The use of artificial intelligence in elections raises significant human rights concerns³ due to its inherent characteristics, including opacity, technical complexity, reliance on large-scale data processing, and, in some cases, autonomous or semi-autonomous decision-making. In the context of the Lebanese Parliamentary Elections of May 2026, the deployment of AI-driven systems in political communication, voter targeting, content moderation, surveillance, or electoral administration may generate not only individual harms but also broader collective and societal-level harms that affect democratic processes as a whole.

These risks include the manipulation of public opinion, discriminatory or biased outcomes, erosion of privacy, lack of transparency and accountability, and the weakening of trust in electoral institutions. AI systems used in electoral contexts may amplify existing inequalities, disproportionately affect marginalized groups, and undermine the ability of voters to make informed and autonomous choices.

We therefore call for the meaningful participation of multiple stakeholders, including the National Human Rights Commission, in the development, implementation, and oversight of norms, rules, and standards governing the design, deployment, use, endorsement, and regulation of artificial intelligence in electoral processes. Such frameworks must be firmly grounded in international human rights law and guided by the principles of legality, necessity, proportionality, transparency, accountability, and non-discrimination⁴.

The Lebanese Government should ensure that any use of AI in elections is subject to clear legal frameworks, independent oversight, and effective remedies, including impact assessments that evaluate potential human rights risks before deployment. Business actors developing or deploying AI technologies in electoral contexts must conduct robust human rights due diligence and take proactive measures to prevent, mitigate, and address adverse impacts. Ensuring responsible governance of artificial intelligence is essential to safeguarding human rights and maintaining the integrity of elections in the digital age.

Internet access

The internet should be recognised and governed as a global public good, managed in an inclusive, transparent, democratic, and accountable manner. Open and secure access to the internet is essential for the exercise of fundamental rights, including freedom of expression,

³ National Human Rights Commission of Lebanon, "Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights: A Guidance Document," *National Human Rights Commission of Lebanon*, September 2, 2024, <https://nhrcib.org/archives/2240>.

⁴ National Human Rights Commission of Lebanon, including the Committee for the Prevention of Torture, "Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights: A Guidance Document," *National Human Rights Commission of Lebanon*, April 7, 2025
<https://nhrcib.org/archives/2240>.

access to information, political participation, and the right to vote, and is therefore particularly critical during electoral periods.

In the context of the Lebanese Parliamentary Elections of May 2026, the Lebanese Government must commit to guaranteeing a neutral, open, and accessible internet for all, without discrimination. Any disruptions to internet connectivity, throttling of services, or restrictions on access during elections risk undermining democratic participation, impeding the free flow of information, and eroding public trust in the electoral process.

The Lebanese government should also refrain from imposing arbitrary or disproportionate restrictions on access to the internet. Particular attention must be given to ensuring equal access for marginalized groups, persons with disabilities, and residents of remote or underserved areas. Guaranteeing inclusive, uninterrupted, and reliable access to the internet during elections is a fundamental element in protecting human rights and safeguarding the integrity and inclusiveness of the electoral process in the digital age.

Discriminatory Content Moderation

During the 2024–2025 period, Meta Platforms, Inc. implemented a series of policies across its platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, and Threads. These measures included, inter alia, restrictions on political advertising during election periods, enhanced transparency requirements for artificial intelligence-generated content, and expanded enforcement of policies relating to so-called “dangerous organizations.”

While such policies are presented as content-neutral and security-oriented, credible reporting by civil-society organizations, journalists, and independent researchers indicates that their implementation has had disproportionate and adverse effects on pro-resistance political expression, including the expression of candidates.

Evidence indicates that pro-resistance and pro-Palestinian content has been subject to reduced visibility, content removal, and account restrictions, often described as “shadow-banning,” limiting public access to political information and undermining equal participation in the digital public sphere. Automated moderation systems have frequently captured legitimate political speech, advocacy, and journalistic content within overly broad prohibitions on support for designated terrorist organizations, even where no incitement to violence was present. Additional concerns include documented algorithmic translation errors that mischaracterize Arabic-language references to Palestinians as references to terrorism, leading to wrongful removals and reinforcing harmful stereotypes.

During the Israeli assault against Lebanon that took place between 8 October 2023 and 27 November 2024, as well as the continued attacks following the signing of a ceasefire agreement, Meta Platforms, Inc. reportedly tightened its automated content-detection thresholds for Lebanon, resulting in a higher rate of content takedowns and a suppressed reach for materials related to the Israeli attacks. These practices, combined with the removal of independent monitoring tools such as CrowdTangle, and allegations by whistleblowers that internal concerns were ignored or penalized, have raised serious transparency and accountability concerns. Although Meta denies any intentional bias, the consistency and scale of reported impacts point to systemic obstacles faced by candidates and advocates in using Meta platforms for political expression, raising significant human-rights concerns related to freedom of expression, political participation, non-discrimination, and access to information.

In the context of the forthcoming 2026 parliamentary elections in Lebanon, these practices raise particular concern given the central role of Meta platforms in political communication, campaigning, and voter outreach. Discriminatory or opaque content-moderation systems risk distorting the electoral environment by limiting equal access to digital spaces for candidates and political movements. The NHRC-CPT considers that unchecked platform governance may undermine the fairness, inclusiveness, and integrity of Lebanon's electoral process, particularly for voices already subject to political or structural marginalization.

3. Principles for a human rights-based approach to technology in elections

Rule of law and good e-governance

The principles of the rule of law, including legitimacy, legality, necessity, and proportionality, as well as the principles of good e-governance, must guide all policies, processes, and practices related to the digitalisation of electoral processes. In the context of the Lebanese Parliamentary Elections of May 2026, the use of digital technologies in elections should be grounded in clear legal frameworks, democratic oversight, and accountability mechanisms, and should aim to empower stakeholders rather than concentrate power or limit rights. Digitalisation must enhance trust, participation, and the protection of human rights throughout the electoral cycle.

Human rights due diligence

Any digital transformation of electoral processes should be preceded and accompanied by robust human rights due diligence. This process should begin with a comprehensive assessment of potential risks to human rights and include the integration of human rights impact assessments in the design, development, deployment, and evaluation of technologies used in elections.

Business actors across the technology ecosystem, including platform providers, telecommunications companies, data processors, search engines, and other relevant actors, should also exercise human rights due diligence in the context of elections. This includes identifying, preventing, mitigating, and accounting for negative human rights impacts linked to their services, particularly risks of discrimination, exclusion, surveillance, or manipulation, and ensuring alignment with international human rights standards.

Transparency and accountability

We advocate for the transparent and accountable deployment of digital technologies throughout all phases of the electoral cycle, including campaign activities, political advertising, vote counting, and results transmission. Transparency is essential to building and maintaining public trust in electoral processes.

Authorities should ensure that information about the use of digital systems in elections is accessible, understandable, and subject to independent scrutiny. Efforts should also be made to counter false or misleading narratives about electronic systems or election technologies, through clear communication, oversight, and accountability, in order to preserve confidence in the integrity of the electoral process.

Inclusivity and non-discrimination

Developing and deploying electoral technologies must not perpetuate or exacerbate existing inequalities. All citizens, regardless of socioeconomic status, gender, disability, age, political opinion, or any other status, must have equal access to and benefit from electoral processes and technologies.

The Lebanese Government should take positive measures to enhance accessibility for vulnerable and marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities and older persons, by enabling assistive technologies and providing election-related information in alternative and accessible formats. For individuals or communities with limited access to technology or limited digital literacy, offline and non-digital alternatives must be available to ensure dignified, fair, and meaningful participation in elections.

Protection of privacy

The right to privacy is a fundamental human right that must be fully respected throughout the electoral process. In the context of elections, any collection, storage, sharing, or processing of personal data, including voter data, biometric data, or online behavioural data, must comply with international human rights and data protection standards.

Data processing related to elections should be lawful, necessary, proportionate, secure, and purpose-limited, and subject to effective oversight and remedies. The use of technologies that enable mass surveillance or intrusive profiling in electoral contexts should be strictly limited and carefully scrutinised.

Freedom of expression

Open, respectful, and informed discussion of political ideas and opinions is essential to democratic elections. Electoral processes require an environment in which individuals can freely express views, access diverse information, and engage in political debate without fear of censorship, intimidation, or retaliation.

Any measures affecting online or offline expression during elections must comply with international human rights standards and avoid undue restrictions that could suppress legitimate political speech or dissent.

Cybersecurity and integrity

Robust cybersecurity measures are essential to protect electoral infrastructure, digital systems, and data from interference, manipulation, or malicious activities that could undermine the integrity of elections. The Lebanese Government should take appropriate steps to safeguard electoral technologies against cyber threats while ensuring that security measures themselves do not infringe on human rights or transparency.

Cybersecurity strategies should be risk-based, transparent, and accompanied by clear accountability mechanisms to maintain public confidence in the electoral process.

Public participation and education

A robust, diverse, inclusive, and protected civic space must be ensured during elections, both online and offline. Public participation and trust depend on citizens being informed about the technologies used in elections, their implications for rights, and the safeguards in place to protect them.

We support initiatives that promote digital literacy, public awareness, and meaningful engagement with electoral technologies, enabling citizens to understand how these systems work and how their rights are respected and protected.

Analogue and offline alternatives

The use of technology in elections should be understood as a means to fulfilling human rights, not as an end in itself. In certain contexts, the use of digital technologies or internet-based systems may be inappropriate or may even undermine human rights or electoral integrity.

The Lebanese Government should therefore assess, on a case-by-case basis, whether digital solutions are suitable, and consider whether analogue or offline alternatives are better equipped to uphold human rights, ensure inclusivity, and maintain public trust in the electoral process. The availability of non-digital options remains essential to safeguarding democratic participation.

4. Implementation

In line with the Paris Principles, we reaffirm our commitment to safeguarding human rights throughout electoral processes, including in the context of the rapid digital transformation of elections. The Lebanese Parliamentary Elections of May 2026 represent a critical opportunity to ensure that the use of digital technologies strengthens democratic participation, transparency, and accountability, rather than undermining them.

By promoting a responsible, ethical, and human-rights-based approach to the use of technology in elections, and by upholding the principles outlined in this position statement, we contribute to the protection of fundamental rights, the reinforcement of public trust, and the advancement of democratic values in the digital age.

Role and contribution of NHRC

The National Human Rights Commission of Lebanon (NHRC Lebanon) is instrumental in bridging and mediating concerns over human rights violations arising at the nexus between businesses, government authorities, and civil society actors. It is essential that NHRC Lebanon increasingly assumes this role in relation to the use and application of digital technologies in electoral processes.

Multi-stakeholder engagement

The complexity, opacity, and cross-border nature of digital technologies necessitate inclusive and sustained engagement among all relevant stakeholders. Effective governance of technology in elections requires the participation of electoral authorities, independent oversight bodies, NHRIs, civil society, academia, media actors, and business enterprises, particularly technology and telecommunications companies.

Multi-stakeholder participation should be institutionalised in the development of laws, policies, regulations, and technical standards related to electoral technologies, as well as in national, regional, and international oversight and advisory mechanisms. Such engagement must explicitly integrate human rights protection as a central objective and ensure that affected communities and marginalized groups are meaningfully included in decision-making processes.