

Lebanon says yes to sectarianism as new Orthodox Law passes

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Lawmakers in the joint parliamentary committees discussing electoral drafts approve the controversial Orthodox Gathering proposal following a walk-out by MPs from the Future Movement and Progressive Socialist Party.

Lawmakers in the joint parliamentary committees discussing electoral drafts approved Tuesday the controversial Orthodox Gathering proposal following a walk-out by MPs from the [Future Movement](#) ^[2] and Progressive Socialist Party.

"I want to announce to the Lebanese that democracy has triumphed over intimidation and we have adopted the Orthodox Gathering law," Free Patriotic Movement MP Alain Aoun said following a vote on the controversial voting system.

While supported by March 8 and March 14 Christian political parties, [Hezbollah](#) ^[3] and the Amal Movement, the Orthodox proposal is strongly opposed by the Future Movement, Progressive Socialist Party, the country's prime minister and president, and a number of Christian lawmakers.

Prior to Aoun's announcement, Future Movement and PSP lawmakers withdrew from the talks after a request to delay a vote on the controversial draft was turned down.

"We withdrew from the session after our request to defer the vote on the Orthodox proposal for 48 hours was turned down," MP Ahmad Fatfat, flanked by his Future Movement colleagues, told reporters after leaving the session.

The Orthodox Gathering draft, which projects Lebanon as a single district wherein each sect elects its own representatives under a proportion representation system, requires a vote in Parliament's General Assembly before it can be adopted as a voting system for the upcoming elections.

"We finished the first stage in adopting our [Orthodox] proposal for the upcoming elections, but we still have the second stage, which will be [during a parliamentary session](#)," ^[4] Aoun said.

On Monday, the joint committees, which included participation by the Future Movement, voted for an article in the Orthodox proposal calling for the number of MPs to be increased from 128 to 134.

Lebanese Forces MP George Adwan and Kataeb MP Sami Gemayel said separately following the vote that the approval of the Orthodox law did not necessarily mean it would be used in the upcoming polls.^[5]

“The door of communication to reach a new electoral law hasn’t closed and will not close,” said Adwan.

“We are definitely in front of a new stage but we interpret it as a natural stage in the search for a better electoral law.”^[6] he said, adding: “The opportunity to reach a new electoral law remains there.”

Gemayel, for his part, said that his party would maintain contacts to discuss the possibility of reaching a consensus-based law.

