



Berri Stresses Security Priority: There Should be a Country for Polls to Take Place

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Speaker Nabih Berri hinted on Monday that the parliamentary elections set to be held on June 9 will be postponed as he warned that security and not the polls were a priority.

“Just take a look at the very worrying security situation,” Berri told several local newspapers.

“The Arab dust, which is called the Arab Spring, is filling up the country’s sky and could turn into a storm that would bring the rain of chaos unless the political groups act” to bring the situation under control, Berri said.

“The priority now is for the security situation not the elections which would become a trigger of explosion if they are held in this atmosphere,” he warned.

“You have to have a country for elections to take place,” Berri stressed.

The speaker reiterated that he was still waiting for the rival March 8 majority and March 14 opposition alliances to propose to him electoral draft-laws that would receive the consensus of the bickering parties.

“I had made a proposal thinking that it was a consensus (draft-law) but they didn't accept it and they didn't propose an alternative,” he said, adding “I am still waiting and waiting.”

Berri was referring to the hybrid draft-law that combines the winner-takes-all and proportional representation systems. He proposed it after the Orthodox Gathering draft-law that was approved by the joint parliamentary committees faced the objection of the opposition al-Mustaqbal bloc, the centrist National Struggle Front of MP Walid Jumblat and the March 14 opposition's independent Christian MPs.

The Orthodox proposal, which divides Lebanon into a single electoral district and allows each sect to vote for its own lawmakers under a proportional

representation system, was also criticized by President Michel Suleiman and Prime Minister Najib Miqati.

Lebanon has been witnessing a series of security incidents, mainly the kidnapping of businessmen or their family members for ransom, a series of deadly attacks on the Lebanese-Syrian border, in addition to tension in the southern city of Sidon after Salafist cleric Sheikh Ahmed al-Asir vowed to escalate his protests against Hizbullah.

Berri's remarks on the security situation met a similar warning made Progressive Socialist Party leader Jumblat, who called for avoiding a crisis in the country.

“Everyone without exception would pay the price of it,” he told As Safir daily.

Jumblat also ejected “any move that would lead to lawlessness and harm stability.”