

Tueni, Mokheiber Announce Endorsement of Butros Electoral Law

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Tuesday, May 06, 2008

BEIRUT: The "Butros Draft Electoral Law" was adopted during a Monday news conference by pro-government March 14 MP Ghassan Tueni and opposition Reform and Change MP Ghassan Mokheiber as a formal electoral law proposition for the 2009 parliamentary elections, which are tentatively scheduled for the months May and June of next year.

Formally addressing Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri in a letter read at the conference, Tueni said the adoption of the law came because "it has become necessary to propose some sort of electoral framework."

Tueni added that the Butros Law, named after national electoral law commission head Fouad Butros, has been adopted even as it "may require either constitutional amendments or changes to the law itself" before ratification in Parliament.

Mokheiber then explained the general process leading up to the drafting of the proposed law and the reasons behind his and Tueni's endorsement of the new framework. He said "[Cabinet] called for the creation of an electoral commission on August 8, 2005, during a session in which all members were present."

"The Butros commission itself viewed 122 electoral law proposals and debated the matter with various legal and political authorities for a period of nine months before arriving at the current 'Butros Law' proposal," added Mokheiber, stressing the efforts of the commission. He also said the potential framework "has not been adequately considered" since the draft was presented to Cabinet on June 1, 2006.

Both Tueni and Mokheiber noted the neglect of the Butros draft proposal within the dispute regarding the electoral law, which they characterized as part of the "circular debate" occurring between feuding Lebanese factions.

However, Mokheiber said that "we [the two legislators] adopt the Butros draft ... and submit it for immediate consideration by the appropriate [parliamentary] committees since there appears to be a consensus regarding the adoption of an electoral law so as to avoid a return to the [2000 framework]."

Mokheiber added that both he and Tueni hoped to "ensure cooperation and the widest possible attendance of deliberative sessions" while Tueni urged Lebanese not to "conflate the issue of the presidency with the electoral law."

The "Butros Draft Electoral Law" is a proposed electoral framework that incorporates majoritarian voting in qadas (smaller districts) and proportional voting at the muhafaza (governate) level of the electoral process, aiming to balance between communal representation and integration.