

## Introduction

Ahead of the 7 June 2009 parliamentary elections in Lebanon, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) established the Lebanese Election Violence Risk Assessment (LEVRA) Project, the objectives of which are:

- to establish an objective, accurate and ongoing tool for assessing the risk of violence to the elections;
- to assess, map and track the level of risk in each of the 26 parliamentary electoral districts in order to identify 'hot-spots' where there may be an increased level of risk;
- to promote the use of the risk assessment as an early-warning mechanism so that effective preventative measures against violence can be taken;
- in particular, to assist Lebanon's Ministry of Interior & Municipalities (MOIM) of Lebanon to integrate risk assessment tools into its security planning for the elections
- to reduce the risk of violent incidents and wider conflict during the 2009 elections

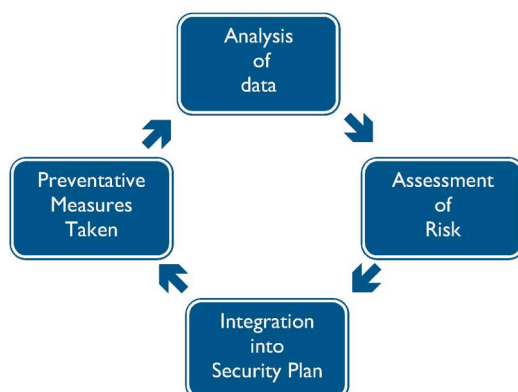
The project, which was funded by the British Embassy in Beirut, ran from September 2008 to April 2010. Specific technical advice on issues related to strategic and operational security planning was generously provided by the Metropolitan Police Service.

## Background: Electoral Violence in Lebanon

Since 1923, Lebanon has regularly held elections except for the period of the civil war (1974-89). The following table identifies the factors of violence that can be associated with political, confessional and electoral violence in Lebanon.

Risk Factors of Political Violence	Risk Factors of Confessional Violence	Risk Factors of Electoral Violence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Although there has been limited historical instances of violence directly related to elections in Lebanon, there are connections between elections and violence in 1956-58, 1972-74 and 2005-08.</li> <li>▪ Political parties have links with militia and are dominated by clan leaders</li> <li>▪ Christian districts have fragmented political groups with longstanding familial rivalries.</li> <li>▪ There is deep polarisation between political blocs</li> <li>▪ Some incumbents face strong challenges</li> <li>▪ Many districts have recent incidents of political violence</li> <li>▪ There is a risk of regional conflict and/or regional interference in the election</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ There have been limited episodes of confessional based hate speech</li> <li>▪ Shia and Sunni MPs and voters are divided along political bloc lines</li> <li>▪ Seats allocated to a minority confession are determined by the majority confession</li> <li>▪ Some districts have no representation of resident confessions</li> <li>▪ Some districts have recent incidents of confessional violence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The electoral system is a 'winners take all' system that produces highly disproportionate results</li> <li>▪ The law requires elections to be held on one day for the first time</li> <li>▪ There will be high spending and intense campaigning, including allegations of vote-buying and intimidation</li> <li>▪ There will be many accusations of violations of the election law</li> <li>▪ The framework for the resolution of electoral disputes is very weak and lacks credibility</li> <li>▪ The Constitutional Council is not functioning</li> <li>▪ The security agencies have limited personnel and resources</li> <li>▪ No security plan for elections or civilian crisis management exists</li> </ul>

## Methodology



The LEVRA project applied a four-step methodology for the gathering and analysis of data that indicate the risk of election-related violence.

- Step One* Analysing data that can indicate risk of political, confessional or electoral violence in an electoral district.
- Step Two* Assessing whether data indicate a risk of violence in that district
- Step Three* Integrating the risk assessment into stakeholders' security plans
- Step Four* Reviewing whether preventative measures are taken and have an impact on the level of risk

**Step One: Analysis of Data**

The LEVRA Project team at IFES gathered relevant qualitative and quantitative data on the risk of violence in an electoral district through desk research, field visits and interviews. This data included:

- the historical and political contextual background to the electoral district, including the key political actors and previous election results
- security incidents occurring in the electoral district since 2005
- demographic information, such as numbers of registered voters and confessional composition
- issues specific to the election (announcement of candidates, etc).

**Step Two: Assessment of Risk**

*Risk Indicators*

Each electoral district was assessed to see whether the available data indicated any risk of violence in that district.

To provide a consistent framework, the LEVA project identified ten indicators of risk within three categories of violence (political, confessional and electoral). The more indicators that were present, the higher the assessment of the risk of violence.

Indicators of Risk of Political Violence	Indicators of Risk of Confessional Violence	Indicators of Risk of Electoral Violence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ There is no dominant political party in the district</li> <li>○ There is likely to be intense political competition for all/some seats                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ There will be significant personalities standing as candidates (e.g. Ministers)</li> <li>▪ The incumbents will face a strong challenge</li> <li>▪ There will be significant levels of campaigning</li> <li>▪ There are longstanding political and/or family rivalries in the district</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ There have been recent incidents of political tension/conflict</li> <li>○ There are specific 'flashpoints' of tension in the district</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ There are "influenced seats" in the district.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A dominant confessional group in the district can determine the winners of seats reserved for other confessions</li> <li>▪ Different confessional groups can coalesce to determine the winners of seats reserved for another confession</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ The winners of influenced seats are unlikely to reflect the choice of the confession they represent.</li> <li>○ The district includes a significant confessional group that does not have parliamentary representation in that district.</li> <li>○ The district has a history of confessional tension.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The results of the election are likely to be very close, increasing the possibility of post-election challenges.</li> <li>○ There is an increased possibility that weapons, undue pressure and/or bribery may be used as part of the campaign in the district</li> </ul>

*Assessing Level of Risk for the 26 electoral districts*

Key	North Lebanon						Mount Lebanon						South Lebanon						Bekaa		Beirut					
	Akkar	Minnieh/Dinnieh	Tripoli	Zgharta	Koura	Batroun	Beharreh	Jbel	Keswan	Mein	Babda	Aley	Chouf	Saida	Zahranl	Jezzine	Nabatieh	Tyr	Bint Jbeil	Marjayoun-Hasbaya	Baalbek-Hermel	Zahleh	West Bekaa-Rachya	Beirut One	Beirut Two	Beirut Three
<b>Risk of Political Conflict</b>	M	M	H	H	H	H	L	M	H	H	H	H	H	M	L	H	L	L	L	M	M	H	M	H	M	M
No dominant political party			•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Intense political competition			•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Recent episodes of tension/conflict	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Specific 'flashpoints'	•	•	•				•							•	•					•	•	•	•			•
<b>Risk of Confessional Conflict</b>	H	L	H	L	L	L	L	M	L	M	M	M	M	L	L	H	L	L	L	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
Presence of influenced seats	•		•					•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Unrepresentative candidates	•		•																	•	•	•	•			•
No confessional representation		•		•	•										•	•			•							
History of confessional tension	•		•					•	•	•	•	•	•			•				•	•	•	•	•	•	•
<b>Risk of Electoral Disputes</b>	L	L	M	H	H	H	L	H	H	H	H	H	M	L	L	H	L	L	L	M	M	H	M	H	M	L
Likelihood of close results/challenges			•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Likelihood of arms, pressure or bribery	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

*Risk Assessment on each of the 26 electoral districts*

A detailed risk assessment was made for each electoral district, gathering all relevant data together (the example shown is the 'hot spot' of Zahle).

After publication of its initial assessment on 1 December 2008, the LEVRA Project team recorded all security incidents and political/electoral developments. Where analysis of data indicated a change to the level of risk, the risk assessment was changed.

Bekaa  
**Zahle**

**Political risk factors:**

- Absence of any dominant political party
- Intense political competition expected
- Recent incidents of violence between political parties.

**Confessional risk factors:**

- Diverse confessional district, with no majority group
- Sunni and Shia seats may be determined by Christian voters
- Potential risk of tension between different Christian communities

**Electoral risk factors:**

- Likelihood of electoral disputes and challenges to election results
- Expectations on high campaign-spending and allegations of vote-buying

**Risk of Political Violence:**

- Absence dominant party: **High** Yes
- Likelihood of intense political competition: Yes
- Recent episodes of violence: Yes
- Specific 'flashpoints' of violence: Yes

**Risk of Confessional Violence:**

- Presence of 'influenced' seats: **High** Yes
- Possible unrepresentative candidates: Yes
- Unrepresented confessional group: Yes
- History of confessional tension: Yes

**Risk of Electoral Disputes:**

- Likelihood of close results/challenges: **High** Yes
- Likelihood of arms, pressure, or bribery: Yes

**LEGEND**

- Major Town
- Water Body
- Water Body

**Registered Voters**

Confession	Count	Percentage
<b>Christians</b>	<b>86,765</b>	<b>59.28%</b>
Greek Catholic	29,413	20.09%
Maronite	24,546	16.77%
Greek Orthodox	14,675	10.03%
Armenian Orthodox	8,360	5.71%
Minorities	6,640	4.54%
Armenian Catholic	1,858	1.27%
Evangelical	1,273	0.87%
<b>Moslems</b>	<b>59,544</b>	<b>40.68%</b>
Sunni	37,422	25.67%
Shia	21,373	14.60%
Druze	740	0.51%
Alawite	9	0.01%
<b>Others</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>0.05%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>146,377</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

**Zahle**

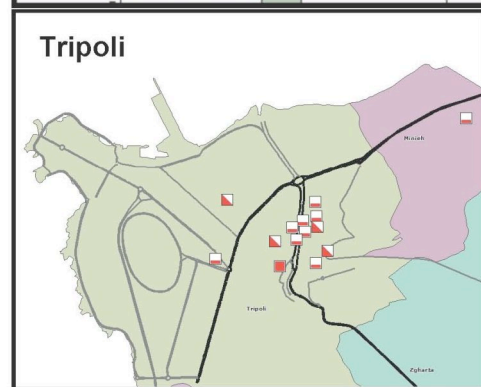
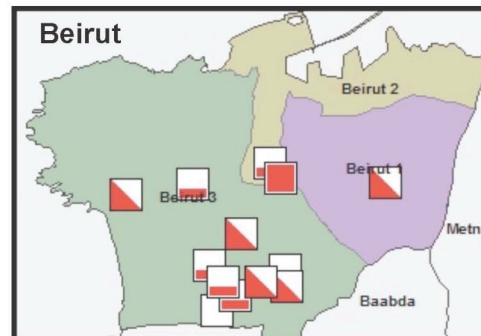
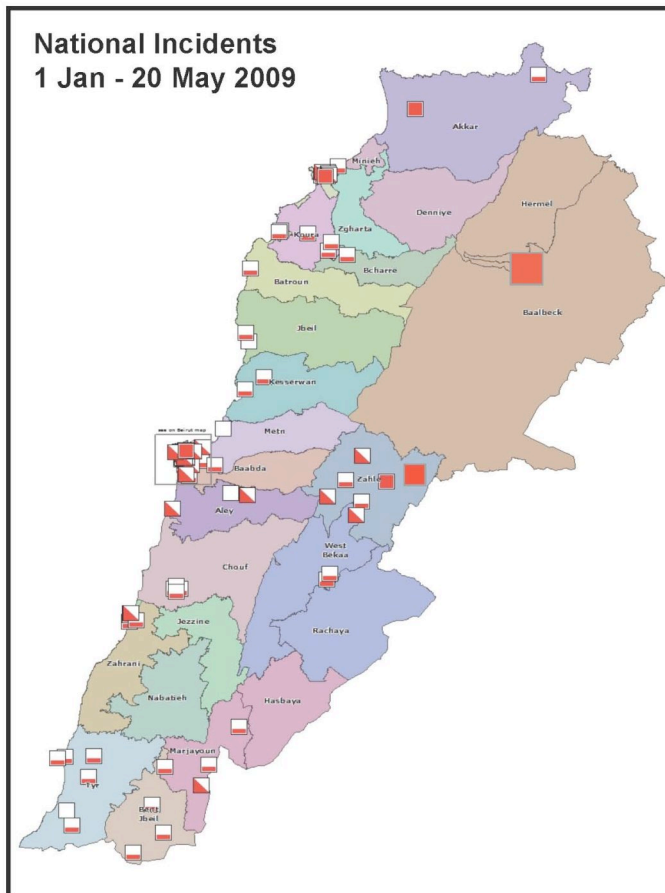
- Greek Catholic
- Maronite
- Greek Orthodox
- Armenian Orthodox
- Minorities
- Armenian Catholic
- Evangelical
- Sunni
- Shia
- Druze
- Alawite
- Others

**Parliamentary Seats**

Confession	Incumbent	Affiliation
Greek Catholic	Elias Joseph Skaff	Independent
Greek Catholic	Nicholas Fatoush	Independent
Sunni	Assem Arraji	Independent
Greek Orthodox	Camille El Maalouf	Independent
Armenian Orthodox	George Qaasarji	Tashnak
Shia	Hassan Mohammad Yaaqoub	Independent
Maronite	Salim Aoun	FPM

*Mapping of Incidents*

All recorded security incidents were mapped in relation to their location, type and severity.



LEVRA project

### Step Three: Integrating the Risk Assessment into Stakeholders' Security Plans

The LEVRA Project was distributed to the primary beneficiary (the MOIM) and other interested stakeholders, including international organisations with security responsibilities (e.g. UN, election observer groups) and Lebanese civil society partners. The analysis was made available in English and Arabic and a secure website ([www.levra.info](http://www.levra.info)) was established to facilitate access to updated and comprehensive information. In reflection of the sensitivity of some assessments, the LEVRA documentation was not made available to the general public. The software used by the LEVRA Project was developed to enable interactive and sustainable use by beneficiaries and stakeholders.

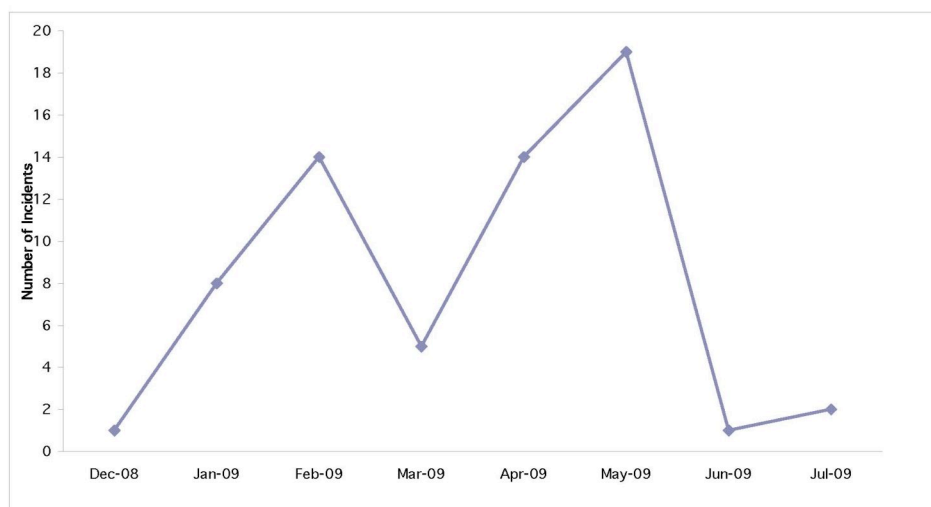
Following the initial publication of the risk assessment, a link was established between the LEVRA project and the MOIM to discuss measures on how the risk assessment could contribute to the security plan for elections. This included a visit to Lebanon by a senior operations officer at the Metropolitan Police Service in February 2009 and a visit to the UK by senior officials of the MOIM to observe the preparations for the G20 London Summit in April 2009. On 18 May, the Lebanese Government formally endorsed a security plan for the elections based on the overall assessment of risk in each electoral district.

### Step Four: The Taking of Preventative Measures

The Electoral Security Plan saw coordinated cooperation between the MOIM and the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) in the deployment of security officers over the election period. Deployment was strengthened in identified 'hot spots' where there was an increased risk of violence related to the election.

There was a distinct decrease in the number of violent incidents recorded by the LEVRA Project following the adoption of the Electoral Security Plan (see chart opposite).

A significant contributory factor to the overall low level of violence during the election was a commitment by all leading politicians to a 'code of ethics'. The MOIM liaised closely with political parties on issues of security concern.



*Number of incidents of election-related violence recorded by the LEVRA Project (Dec 08 – Jul 09)*

### Post-Election Risk

Following the 7 June elections, the LEVRA Project continued to monitor political and electoral developments closely in order to identify possible further risk of violence. These issues included political tension during negotiations on the formation of the Government and challenges to electoral results. Fortunately, there were no related incidents of violence during this period. The LEVRA Project team also tracked developments in the political environment ahead of the calling of local elections, which take place in May 2010.

### Conclusion and Areas for Lessons Learned

International observers "found the elections fundamentally peaceful and well-administered" (NDI Report) and noted that the effective and high profile security deployment over the election period, strengthened on polling day, facilitated an inclusive election process. Overall, although tension ran high in key districts where the election results were extremely close, there were fewer security incidents than initially expected. The methodology and relevant information and software have been transferred to the MOIM for their use in future elections, including the 2010 local polls.

The LEVRA Project undertook a comprehensive lessons learned evaluation with the primary beneficiary and other stakeholders, including a review meeting with security colleagues in the United Kingdom. Overall, there was a highly positive reception to the project's capacity to provide an accurate and credible assessment on the risk of electoral violence in each of Lebanon's electoral districts, especially through innovative methods of applying political, electoral and demographical contextual factors to the risk of violence. In addition to the risk assessment information, the engagement of New Scotland Yard experts (including the two field visits) contributed significantly to the development of an effective security plan by the MOIM for the full election period, including the establishment of a Security Operations Room. The availability of the project's detailed maps of electoral districts and the comprehensive tracking of incidents was considered to be especially helpful by secondary beneficiaries, such as civil society organisations and diplomats. The assessment of risk was particularly helpful in identifying key 'hot-spots' for the appropriate deployment of security personnel and ensuring additional sensitivity for their management of campaign events, the conduct of polling and increased risks during the results period. For future similar projects, whether in Lebanon or in other countries, it was recommended that there should be peer-review of the methodology ahead of its implementation, as well as broader consultation on the findings before publication.