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2022

POLITICAL PROPAGANDA AND INFORMATION MANIPULATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA DURING THE LEBANESE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS



This report was produced by Maharat Foundation supported by Democracy Reporting International.

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Political propaganda and information manipulation on social media during the Lebanese Parliamentary elections 2022

Introduction: Information circulation on social media

Political communication is one of the main pillars of democratic life. Political actors constitute the most prominent elements of political communication through the various forms of communication that they carry out to achieve certain goals, whether organized and linked to agendas or circumstances to achieve immediate goals. Communication directed by those who are not working in politics, such as public opinion, voters and influencers, is considered one of the political communication links, in addition to media coverage that deals with political affairs.

Social media constitute one of the main channels for political communication in its various forms during electoral campaigns, and political propaganda is one of the most ultimate methods of political communication during elections due to its ability to influence and bring about changes in individuals' thoughts, attitudes and behaviors. Until it became one of the means of manipulating and misleading public opinion, or controlling it for non-democratic political objectives.

In addition to using traditional media from newspapers, news websites, television and radio to social media to communicate interactively and more dynamically with the public, parties, political forces and candidates use social media to exchange information and direct contact with partisans, supporters and voters. These accounts are active during the elections to reduce the gap presented in the traditional media in terms of equality in the media appearances of the various political players. A large number of accounts that aim at political advertising and promotion are also active, and these accounts may be used to target opponents through the circulation of rumors and false and incorrect news, or they may be used to launch and promote campaigns of a political or social nature or campaigns promoting hate speech, violence or bullying and discrediting opponents, from politicians to opinion leaders including influencers and media professionals.

First: Executive Summary:

General context:

In terms of the most prominent conclusions of the analysis of the results of monitoring political discourses on social media and its effects:

- Since October 2019, Lebanon has been facing critical financial, economic, political and security crises that led to the resignation of two governments and the disruption of the work of the last one, headed by Najib Mikati.
- The judiciary faced fierce campaigns from political parties protecting politicians and security personnels suspected of failing to carry out their duties to prevent the explosion of 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate that had been stored in the Beirut Port for seven years since November 2013 with the full acknowledgement and reference of judicial, security, administrative and political bodies, and which led to an explosion on August 4 th , 2020, causing great destruction in the city of Beirut, with around 220 victims and more than 7,500 wounded.
- On October 14 th , 2021, Lebanon regained the specter of civil war after Shiite demonstrators from the southern suburb of Beirut entered neighborhoods in the predominantly Christian area of Ain al-Remmaneh (from which the first war broke out in 1975) causing problems with the residents of the area that turned into a street war for hours, leading to multiple deaths and wounded citizens while threatening the civil and public peace before the situation was controlled by the security services.
- Despite promoting the authority's unwillingness to hold the parliamentary elections on time and the inability to control security, the President of the Republic signed a decree inviting the electorate on December 29 th , 2021, and the Minister of Interior announced on January 10 th , 2022, opening the door for candidacy for the elections, which ended on March 15 th , followed by a deadline of ten days for registering the electoral lists before April 4 th , 2022, in preparation for holding the general elections on May 15 th , 2022, preceded by the expatriate elections on May 6 and 8, and the elections for public employees on May 12 th .

Monitoring political discourse on social media:

- With the start of the election campaigns, the political discourse on the social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter was monitored while focusing on 96 candidates from various traditional and emerging political parties, in addition to 11 non-candidate politicians and 25 influencers with multiple partisan and political affiliations in order to determine the type of political propaganda used, topics of political debate and streams in information manipulation. and mislead of the public opinion.

- The process of monitoring the discourses included political actors of both genders whereby women constituted 20% of the observed sample. It should be noted that the percentage of women candidates who were able to confirm their candidacies in the final registered lists to run for the parliamentary elections was 118, or 16.43% of the total number of general candidates, which was 718 candidates.
- The volume of posts and tweets monitored on the Twitter and Facebook platforms of the 132 actors among the politicians, candidates and influencers reached 2,628 posts/tweets from April 1 st to May 15 th , distributed mostly on Twitter as the primary chosen platform according to the monitoring methodology, and to a lesser extent on Facebook as a secondary platform for active users.
- The percentage of political propaganda based on speeches aiming on triggering sectarian and political emotions was 49.5%.
- Electoral advertising discourses came in second place scoring a rate of 21.3%, which varied between the different actors.
- The total political discourses related to electoral programs and proposing solutions and alternatives reached 7.5% of the total observed political discourses by the political actors on social media platforms.
- The history of the civil war, its events and political assassinations appeared at 1% in the political discourses, as well as 0.5% for the promotion of conspiracy theories (such as fear of social conflicts and postponing elections). This aims to strengthening sectarian and partisan ideologies and spread propaganda aimed at confusing and misleading the public opinion.
- The traditional political forces relied more on a rhetoric approach of inciting feelings through strengthening sectarian and partisan ideologies.
- 31% of the political discourses of the emerging political parties focused on electoral propaganda compared to 15% for the traditional political parties.
- The percentage of political discourses related to electoral programs reached 8% among emerging political parties, compared to 3% for traditional political parties.
- The memory of the civil war reached 2.6 percent in the political discourses of the influencers, exceeding the percentage of candidates and politicians. As well as recording 1.3% of their political discourse to glorify political leaders and their image.
- The issue of corruption constituted a basic material for political propaganda within the political actors' discourses, reaching 15%, in addition to 5% issuing the topic of Lebanon's neutrality, sovereignty, and Hezbollah's weapons, and 5.4% to raise issues related to the Lebanese diaspora.

- The percentage of political discourses issuing the country's development issues, unemployment and job opportunities creation was 2.41%, the governance system the state and its institutions were 2.31%, social justice and human rights issues reached 2%, energy files were around 2% of these discourses, the Beirut port explosion 1.4%, the internal and external security issues reached 0.6. %, and decentralization around 0.4%. It was noteworthy that the largest percentage appeared on the issues of social justice and human rights which were the focus of the political discourses of the emerging political parties.
- The percentage of political discourses issuing topics on education, the environment, the blockade, sanctions and the displaced reached a low rate of 0.25%, as well as the issue of women's participation and empowerment, reaching only 0.1%.
- The rhetoric and tone of candidates and politicians during election campaigns was negative and adopted an escalatory behavior that exacerbated the conflict. The percentage of negative speech reached 71% (1,943 posts and tweets) of the total observed political discourses.
- The negative political discourse of political actors was reflected in campaigns on social media that express the state of political division and the escalation of the conflict through offensive and defamatory discourse that includes treason and accusations of corruption and ceding sovereignty, identity and employment abroad.

Monitor Twitter campaigns:

- 134 trending campaigns were monitored on Twitter between April 1 st and May 31 st , 69% of which were led by a partisan party or a particular political orientation. Among the political parties that stimulated the most popular hashtag/trends related to the electoral campaigns, Lebanese Forces activists came first place with 25 hashtags, followed by supporters of the Free Patriotic Movement (20 hashtags) and then Hezbollah (18 hashtags).
- In fact, it turned out that the Free Patriotic Movement was the most targeted through these campaigns (10 hashtags/trends), followed by media personality such as Dima Sadek (7 hashtags/trends), then the Lebanese Forces (6 hashtags/trends) and Hezbollah (6 hashtags).
- The launch of hashtag / trending campaigns on Twitter was not limited to "trolls" who manage accounts that aim to promote political propaganda on a permanent basis, or fake accounts that are created for specific purposes. However, active pages on social media, including those that provide political or social content, journalists and politicians, participated in launching hashtag/trending campaigns to be stimulated by activists on Twitter.
- Fake accounts were used to launch campaigns on Twitter for political promotion to attract votes, such as #boycotting_them_will_serve_you, or for defamation and slander, such as #Story_of_Paula_Yacoubian_list.

Monitor Facebook groups and pages:

- In parallel to the electoral campaigns and political positions, a huge number of groups and pages on Facebook were active. The political discourse of a sample of 42 pages and groups were monitored on Facebook which promotes opposing and revolutionary parties.
- Monitoring the type of political propaganda on which the political discourse of these pages and groups promoting political actors on Facebook was based upon, showed that these discourses focused on stimulating sectarian and political feelings reaching 38%, while the type of political propaganda related to promoting political actors (glorifying a leader, electoral advertisement, whitewashing the image of the leader) recorded a percentage of 43% and this indicates that the main role of these pages and groups on Facebook was, on the one hand, to promote a particular political group, and on the other hand, to insult and defame political opponents.
- By following the posts of the pages and groups, the subject of the monitoring sample on Facebook was found that it contributes to spreading rumors, as there was a record of promoting 79 rumors and six false news between April 1 st and May 15 th , which is 1.6% of the total monitored circulating posts.
- Manipulation and misinformation campaigns were monitored on social media and the dissemination of content prepared or used in order to mislead and influence voters.
- Misleading content has been used in various political contexts, including those directly related to specific candidates with the intent of defaming a subject, as in the cases of candidate Jad Ghosn, candidate Karen Boustani, candidate Josephine Zougheib and candidate Paula Yacoubian. or publishing this content to manipulate information by using visual/audio content or documents to support a specific narrative that harms a particular actor, such as publishing content about Hezbollah's correlation with the Beirut Port explosion, or exploiting and manipulating published content to promote, for example, Hezbollah's fundamentalist culture that it wants to impose via threat and power with the approval and denial of his allies in the elections from and against other parties.
- We monitored a movement of fake accounts run by unknown parties with the aim of publishing unverified information regarding candidates aimed at offending them and accusing them of bribery to buy votes.

Hate speech phenomenon:

- Hate speech was monitored on Facebook pages and groups, the subject of the monitoring sample exposed political actors and candidates with offensive words based on sex and gender identity. And violating and harassing them with expressions that include sexual acts.

- A speech encouraging violence by activists on social media emerged through [publications](#) urging and encouraging to an armed revolution in the event of the failure of the peaceful revolution at the polls, and videos threatening and [encouraging violence](#) against [candidates](#) and political activists.

- It was found that the majority of women candidates used campaign accounts on social media or their personal accounts for electoral promotion and communication with their followers. It was found that there were 5 female candidates who did not have any account on social media and that about 12 did not use their accounts effectively. While about 100 female candidates were active on social media to promote, publicize and launch their electoral positions.

- Speech of stimulating sectarian and political ideologies and emotions was part of the discourse of political actors by 32%, however the electoral advertising and promotion of the electoral program reached 55% of the total discourses, in addition to the fact that about 67% of the topics of political discourse focus on electoral campaigns, and this indicates the need for women candidates to appear in advertising and self-promotion to fill the gap in media appearances, where this percentage did not exceed 5% in TV news coverage during the electoral campaigns.

- Some of the women candidates were subjected to electronic violence on their social media accounts, and by monitoring the accounts of 100 active female candidates on social media, it was found that 43% were exposed to some form of digital violence against women.

- The type of cyber violence against women in politics was distributed between 6% of sexual violence (sending sexual statements or content to the candidate) and 94% of psychological violence (bullying, abuse, prejudice, threats and intimidation directed on the basis of sex, gender, or social stereotyping).

- By analyzing the form of violent discourses directed at female candidates through comments on their accounts and their activity on social media, it was found that 86% of the responses and violent comments took the form of cyberbullying (abuse), and 6% came in the form of violence based on appearances and age, as well as a similar rate of sexual harassment. In addition, 1.6 % of violent comments were recorded in the category of bias against women, including stereotypes related to gender, the role of women in society, and the patterns that should be followed and imposed on them by the society and the environment in which they live.

As for behavioral acts:

- It can be said that political actors have used the Twitter space for complex amplification through targeted campaigns aimed at influencing political opponents.

- The manipulators of information and their dissemination of information are mostly fake accounts that promote political actors, and we were unable to monitor coordinated manipulated campaigns. (inauthentic coordinated behavior)

- We were not able to monitor unconventional tools used in managing organized campaigns to influence public opinion, specifically via Twitter, which allow publishing on multiple accounts simultaneously.
- Deepfake (VOICE CLONING) technologies have not been used professionally to mislead and influence the public opinion.
- The launch of hashtag / trending campaigns on Twitter was not limited to “trolls” who manage accounts that aim to promote political propaganda on a permanent basis, or fake accounts that are created for specific purposes and time periods. However, active pages on social media, including those that provide political or social content, journalists and politicians, participated in launching hashtag/trending campaigns to be stimulated by activists on Twitter.

Second: Objectives and methodology

This study aims to monitor political discourse on social media for actors during electoral campaigns, specifically the following:

- Review the general context from which the electoral campaigns were launched.
- Determine the group of players and influencers on social media during electoral campaigns. Monitoring the content of political propaganda by political actors during electoral campaigns.
- Determine the topics on which the political discourse is based.
- Monitor campaigns of manipulation and misinformation during electoral campaigns and electoral silence and their source.
- Analyze the extent to which political propaganda introduced by actors and influencers effects public opinion.
- Monitor the public discourse that promotes hatred and violence.
- Monitor and analyze the gender dimensions of electoral campaigns.

Third: Sample used for monitoring

Timeframe: from April 1 to May 15

A. Political actors

A group of political actors, consisting of politicians, candidates and influencers, were monitored on social media, and this sample for the months of April and May amounted to 132 personalities, 20% of whom were women.

The sample was distributed as follows:

- 107 politicians and candidates representing various traditional and emerging political forces and the geographic and demographic divisions of the 15 electoral districts.
- 25 influential figures with multiple partisan and political trends.

Politician	11
Influencer	25
Candidate	96
Total	132

Fourth: The general context from which the election campaigns were launched

The events witnessed in Lebanon since the summer of 2019 recorded the economic and financial collapse and the October 17 protests that toppled the Hariri government, and then the Beirut port explosion disaster that brought down the Diab government and the economic rescue plan to be implemented with the International Monetary Fund. The outbreak of the Corona virus has also led to increasing pressures on the health, hospital and economic system. The World Bank described the economic crisis in Lebanon as "the most severe and severe in the world", and classified it among the three most difficult crises recorded in history since the mid-nineteenth century. In 2021, poverty reached about 74% of the total population in Lebanon, after it was 55% in 2020, and 28% in 2019. ¹It was estimated that multidimensional poverty nearly doubled between 2019 and 2021, affecting 82% of the population in 2021.²

¹ Report of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

² Report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Olivier de Schutter, 11 May 2022

Migration reached breaking record levels in 2021, as the number of Lebanese immigrants and travelers, from the beginning of 2021 until mid-November 2021, reached 77,777 individuals, compared to 17,721 individuals in 2020.³

In a report published on May 11, 2022, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Olivier de Schutter, considered that "the destructive actions of political and financial leaders in Lebanon are responsible for driving most of the country's population into poverty, in violation of international human rights law." A World Bank report issued in the fall of 2021 entitled "Lebanon's Economic Monitor: The Great Denial," indicated that the deliberate recession in Lebanon was orchestrated by the country's elite leaders, who have long controlled the reins of the state and monopolized its economic profits. This domination has persisted despite the severity of the crisis and is endangering the country's long-term stability and social peace⁴. 2021 was the worst year in terms of high prices and the collapse of the purchasing power of the Lebanese, as the salaries of state employees lost 97 percent of their value. While inflation reached breaking records, the markets witnessed the loss of basic commodities as a result of the monopoly, and the decline in the capacity of foreign exchange led to a fuel crisis that prompted the Lebanese to wait in queues of humiliation, and the crisis developed into the loss of essential medicines and the threat to the health of citizens.

The state of "denial" continued, as described by the World Bank report, by holding the elite leaders responsible for the state of the Lebanese people, and the ruling class refused to give up the privilege of power and hold early elections, as demanded by the revolutionaries and some political forces that submitted their resignation from Parliament following the explosion of the port in an attempt to pressure to hold early elections, but all this came to fail with the insistence of the traditional parties that any change can only take place by democratic means through parliamentary elections that reflect the will of the voters and within the constitutional deadlines.

The economic crisis was also accompanied by a governance crisis and a loss of confidence between a segment of the citizens who rose up on October 17 and the ruling class. A large segment of the Lebanese who called for the slogan "All of them, means all of them" relied on change through the elections after the street failed to bring down the "system" that resisted to all forms of accountability. The investigation of the explosion of the port was a reflection of the failed legal accountability mechanism within the system based on quotas, sectarianism and clientelism. The summoning of former ministers Ali Hassan Khalil and Ghazi Zaiter to the investigation and the issuance of an arrest warrant in absentia against the Ali Hassan Khalil on October 12, 2021 almost led to the outbreak of a civil war in Lebanon following the Tayouneh

<https://lebanon.un.org/en/181582-report-special-rapporteur-extreme-poverty-and-human-rights-olivier-de-schutter>

³ Report of international information

⁴ Report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Olivier de Schutter, 11 May 2022, previous reference.

events that took place on October 14, 2021 subsequent to a protest against the investigation process in the case of the bombing of the port of Beirut. This led to a friction between supporters of Hezbollah and the Lebanese Amal movement from the Shiite sect and the Christian residents of the Ain al-Rummaneh area, the majority of whom are supporters of the Lebanese Forces Party, which took on a sectarian character, resulting in a number of deaths and injuries with the return of the atmosphere of civil war and the exchange of words that included hate speech and incitement to violence. This was accompanied by the disruption of the meetings of the newly formed government of Prime Minister Mikati for more than two months by the Shiite duo in protest against the procedures of the judicial investigator in the case of the port explosion, which intensified the crisis and international pressures to hold accountable those responsible for the port explosion, as well as to hold the elections on time.

Despite many actors' skepticism about the intention of the political authority to hold the elections on time, the government of President Najib Mikati confirmed in its first meeting after its formation on September 13, 2021 the approval of the economic recovery plan and the holding of the parliamentary elections on their expected date in May 2022. And with the Cabinet approval of the mechanism for registering expatriates to participate in the electoral process, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, Abdullah Bouhabib, launched the process of registering expatriates wishing to vote abroad, starting from the first of October until the twentieth of November 2021.

The procedures for registering expatriates were completed successfully, and the Lebanese Foreign Ministry announced that about 245,000 Lebanese expatriates had registered their names to participate in the elections. Despite the political divisions between the President of the Republic and his political team represented by the Free Patriotic Movement and other political forces represented by the Lebanese Forces, the Progressive Socialist Movement and the Amal Movement regarding the role of expatriate in the elections and regarding them voting for their special representatives in accordance with the provisions of the law or voting for the 128 representatives on an equal basis with the resident voters that was proposed, as well as the dispute regarding the date of the elections and the adoption of megacenters as optional polling centers in cities and major residential communities, however, this dispute was resolved in the Parliament in favor of expatriate voting according to the resident election system for the 128 deputies that make up the parliament. And the date of the general elections was agreed later to be on May 15, the date of the general elections, after the insistence of the President of the Republic on that.

The sharp political public debate regarding the parliamentary elections was accompanied by a high-pitched political discourse related to civil peace and sovereignty, sanctions and international embargo, confining arms to the Lebanese state and neutrality from regional conflicts in the region, Iran's role in influencing the Lebanese Hezbollah and the government's options to rise and rescue between heading east or west.

One of the most prominent files that were valued from the sharp discourse was Hezbollah's entry of Iranian oil into Lebanon from the land through Syria without the government's approval. In September and late November, a diplomatic crisis erupted with Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states as a result of statements by former information minister George Kordahi criticizing the absurd war in Yemen, in addition to the statements of Major General of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Gholam Ali Rashid (September 30, 2021) about the establishment of six armies outside Iran, including The Lebanese Hezbollah and his statement that it constitutes a deterrent force in favor of Iran, which created strong responses from the anti-Hezbollah forces. In a statement by Hezbollah Deputy Secretary-General Naim Qassem on January 10, 2021, he said: "The resistance in Lebanon has become one of the constants that cannot be tampered with, so whoever wants can join it and whoever does not want to should look for another solution." Anti-Hezbollah forces responded to Qassem's speech, and considered that his words included intimidation and threats and an invitation to all who reject the idea of resistance to leave and search for another country.

All these challenges hindered the government's path to advance the economic and financial plan with the severe exacerbation of the crisis in its various aspects. However, the course of the parliamentary elections procedures did not witness tangible obstruction despite the challenges related to monitoring the elections and securing the financial resources necessary to conduct them. The President of the Republic signed a decree inviting the electorate on December 29, 2021, and the Minister of Interior announced on January 10, 2022, opening the door for candidacy for the elections, which ends on March 15, followed by a ten-day deadline for registering the electoral lists that ends on April 4, 2022 in preparation for holding the general elections on May 15 of 2022, it will be preceded by the expatriate elections on May 6 and 8, and the elections for employees on May 12.

The impact of the reality of the economic and financial collapse, which resulted in a social crisis that increased the rates of poverty, unemployment, migration and violence, and the deterioration of health and hospital services and citizens' access to them, as well as the squandering of the savings of the Lebanese in banks, the exhaustion of the Banque du Liban's reserves of US dollars, and the absence of a clear government plan and effective accountability mechanisms for those who caused the collapse, was reflected on the political discourse of the electoral campaigns, which was characterized by the exchange of responsibilities and the call for punitive voting.

As so this study aims to detect the foundations of the political discourse of the various actors during the electoral campaigns in terms of the type of political propaganda used and the most interesting topics. The monitoring study aims to shed light on the various phenomena and behaviors resulting from the prevailing political discourse through social media, investment campaigns and media manipulation, and to monitor misleading political discourse to influence

voters, which is the easiest way to win voters' support in an atmosphere of inconsistency and confusion of information.

Fifth: The legal framework for electoral campaigns on social media

The Law on the Election of Parliament Members No. 44 of 2017 stipulated restrictions on public and private media operating in Lebanon during the electoral campaign period with regard to media and electoral advertising.

According to Article 68 of the Election Law, media means is defined as "every public or private media, visual, audio, print, read, or electronic, regardless of its technology."

Despite the lack of clarity in the legal text in terms of whether social media or websites are considered among the media, Article 63 of the Election Law 25/2008 states the term "media institution" in general without detailing its type, form and broadcasting technology, so that the current text explains these details. So, the previous text adopted the concept of "media institution" in its organizational and professional sense and subjected it to obligations related to broadcasting media and advertising materials related to electoral campaigns and propaganda.

From this approach, it is not possible to expand the interpretation of the provisions of the legal text currently in force, which details the types of media and their techniques covered by the provisions of the election law to extend its effects on the pages and accounts on social media, as long as the latter cannot be described as a media institution, specifically accounts and personal pages, or those that are used for electoral advertising.

What is meant by online media means newspapers, news websites, parties' news websites and relevant applications, including text and multimedia messaging services, which provide news services under the concept of a media outlet, whether they are licensed or not, and without expanding the interpretation of that.

The Supervisory Commission reserves the right to monitor the pages of candidates and lists on social media to verify the amount of electoral spending on paid advertising through paid advertising services, in addition to monitoring the content of the candidates' political discourse, specifically related to hate speech. In this last case, the supervisory commission cannot refer the offending candidate to the Publications Court, because social media does not fall within the qualitative jurisdiction of this court, which is competent to consider cases related to the media in the professional sense associated with the media institution.

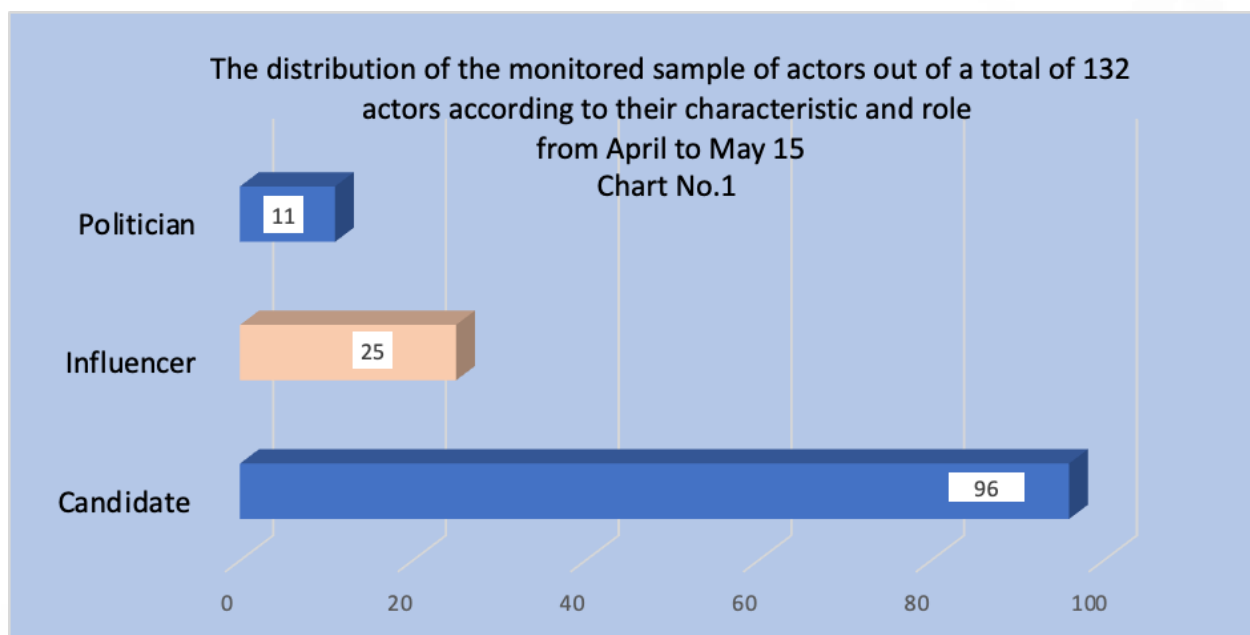
Article 69 of the electoral law affirmed the right of candidates to communicate with voters by the means they deem appropriate and "in the appropriate manner and attitude that do not conflict with laws and regulations."

Sixth: Electoral campaigns on social media

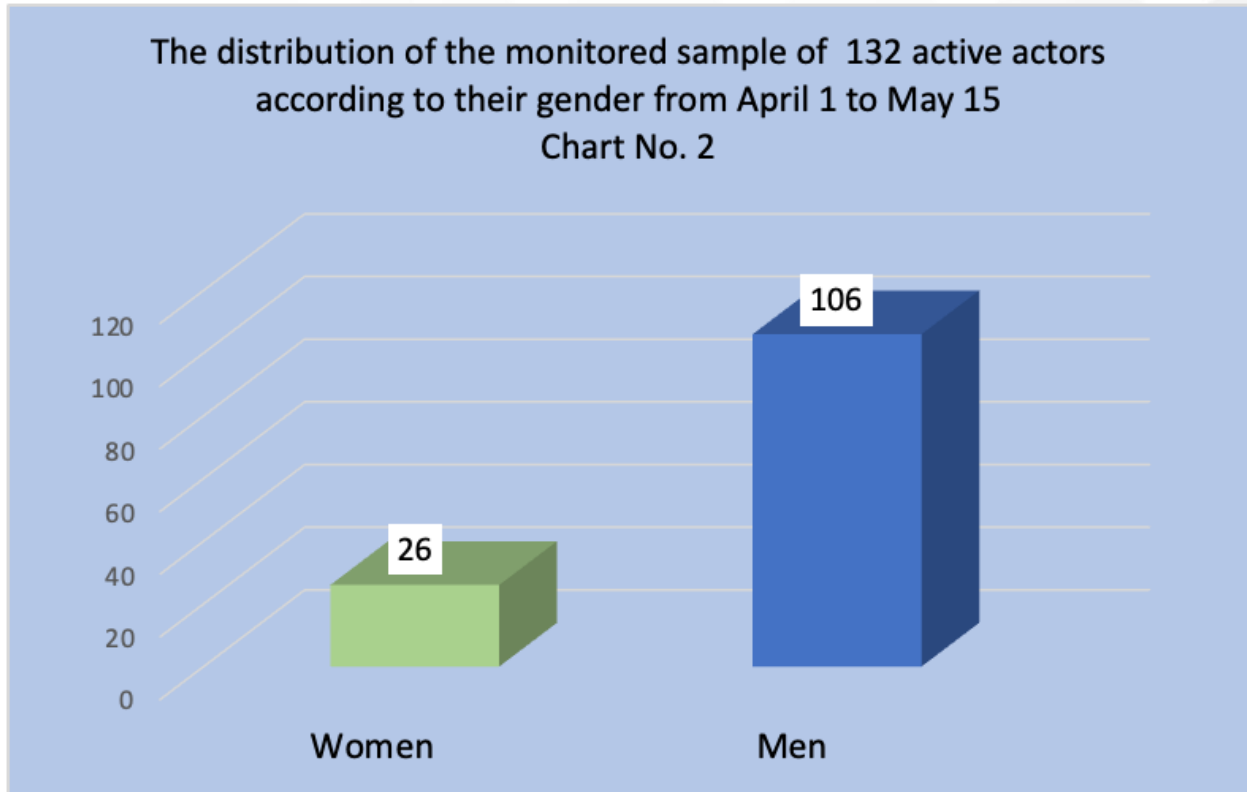
1- The general political discourse accompanying the electoral campaigns:

A- Distribution of the monitored sample among the accounts of actors on social media:

- The political discourse on the social media sites Facebook and Twitter was monitored among 96 candidates from various traditional and emerging political directions, in addition to 11 non-candidate politicians and 25 influencers with multiple partisan and political trends. (see chart 1)

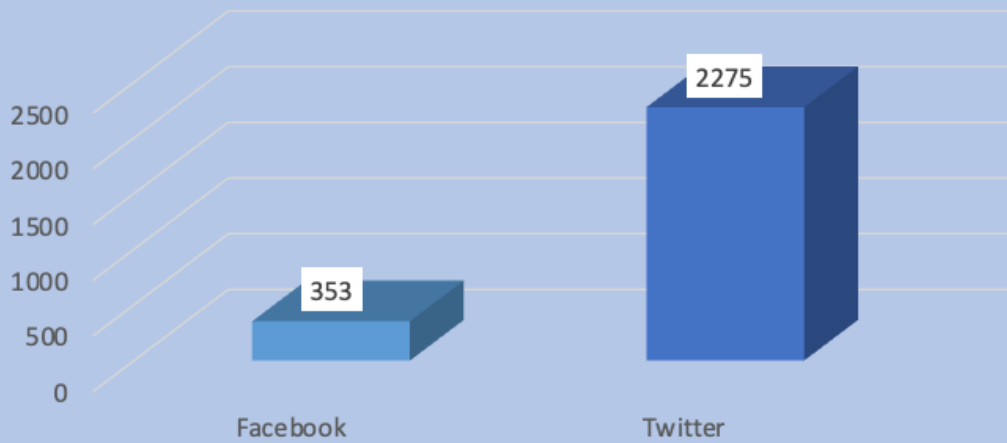


- The monitored sample was distributed between the two genders as women made up 20% of the total monitored actors. It is important to note that the percentage of women candidates who were able to confirm their candidacies in final registered lists to run in the parliamentary elections amounted to 16.43% of the total number of final candidates, which amounted to 718 candidates, from which 118 of them are women. (see Chart No.2)



- The volume of posts and tweets monitored on Twitter and Facebook of the 132 active actors including politicians, candidates and influencers amounted to 2,628 posts/tweets from April 1 to May 15, distributed mostly on Twitter and to a lesser extent on Facebook. This is due to the fact that the majority of the actors' accounts were monitored on Twitter as a primary platform. As for the actors who do not have accounts on Twitter or rely on Facebook as a mean of communicating with the public, they were monitored on Facebook. (Table 3)

The distribution of monitored posts and tweets on Twitter and Facebook of the total 132 active actors including politicians, candidates and influencers
Sample of 2628 posts/tweets
Chart No.3

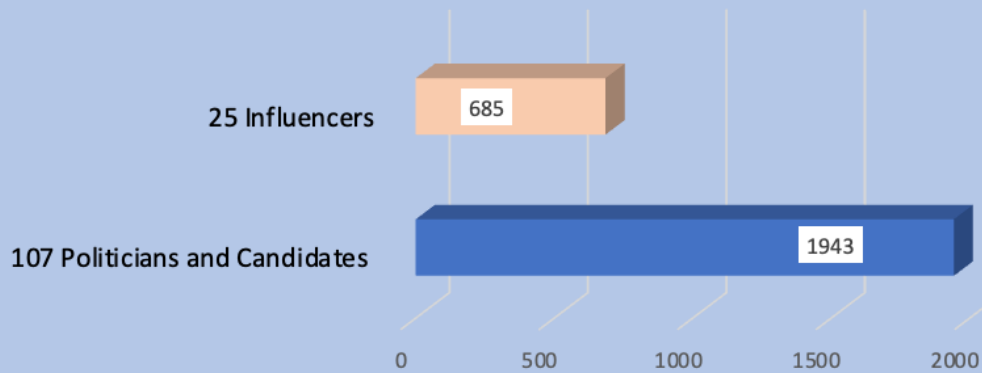


- The monitored sample of posts and tweets, amounting to 2,628, was distributed among the 132 active actors monitored during the electoral campaigns from April 1 to May 15, 1943 posts/tweets by politicians and candidates, and 685 by influencers. (see Chart No.4)

The distribution of the monitored sample of posts and tweets, amounted to a total of 2628 by the 132 monitored active actors during electoral campaigns

Sample of 2628 posts/tweets

Chart No. 4



Type of Political propaganda

B- The type of political propaganda used by the 132 active political actors is being monitored on social media, including Facebook and Twitter.

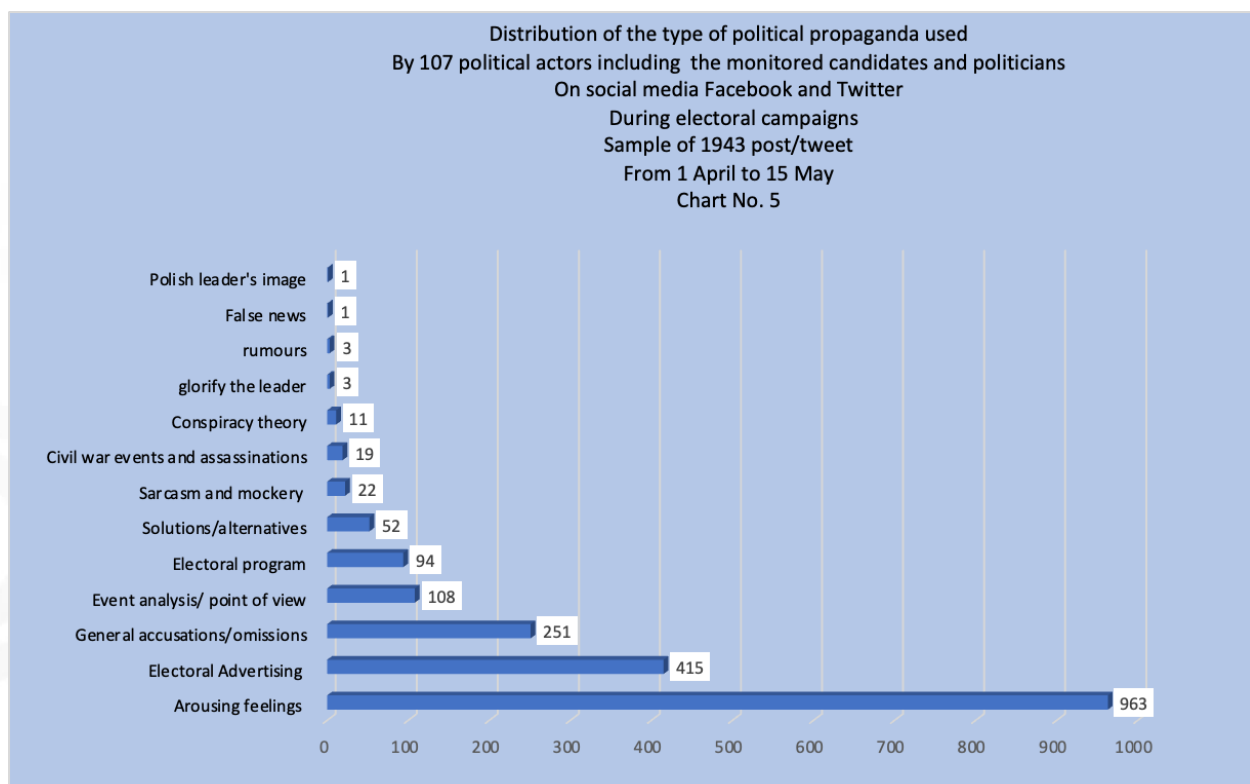
- The foundations of political propaganda for candidates and politicians in general:

The distribution of the type of political propaganda used by the registered actors from candidates and politicians on social media, Facebook and Twitter, according to the monitored sample of 1,943 posts/tweets during the electoral campaigns from April 1 to May 15, is as follows (see Table No. 5):

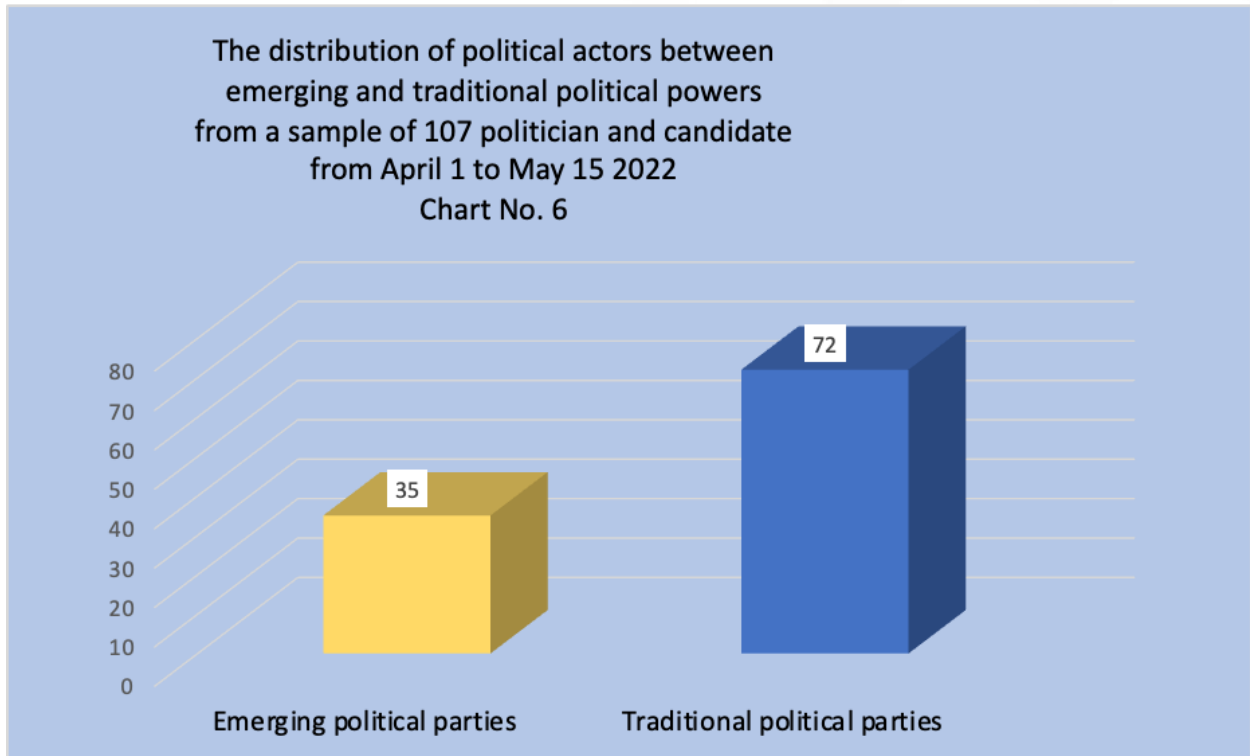
- The percentage of political propaganda based on persuasive emotional speech reached 49.5%.

Arousing feelings: a discourse based on attacking specific political opponents and accusing them or posting negative and stereotypical images of them to damage their reputation and distort their political image in front of public opinion.

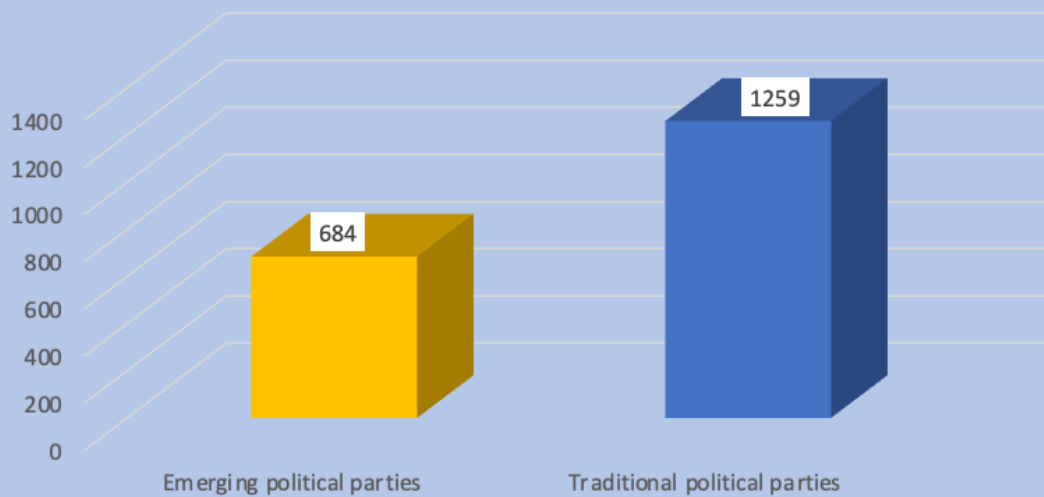
- Electoral advertising discourse came in second place with a rate of 21.3%, which varied between the different actors.
- The political discourse promoting the punitive vote was reflected in political propaganda based on generalization and accusations and general omissions against the system and the political authority that held the responsibility for the collapse in the absence of a legal accountability mechanism, and based on the slogan #all_means_all, and a rate of 12.9% was recorded.
- The total political discourse related to electoral programs and proposing solutions and alternatives reached 7.5% of the total political discourse observed by political actors on social media.
- The memory of war and political assassinations is still present in the political discourse by 1%, in addition to promoting conspiracy theory (such as warning against creating sedition and postponing elections) by half a percent. This aims to tighten sectarian and partisan nerves and spread propaganda aimed at confusing public opinion.



- The most important comments and differences between the foundations of political propaganda led by political actors from the traditional and emerging powers:
 - The observed sample was distributed among the traditional and emerging political forces as follows: Charts No. 6 and 7.

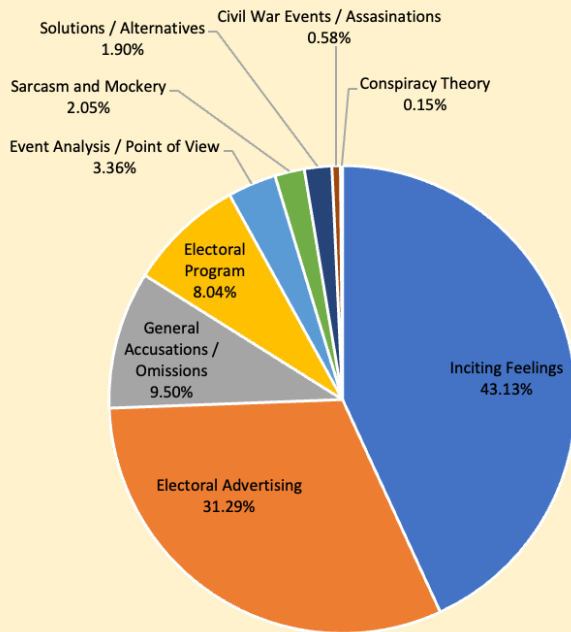


The distribution of monitored posts and tweets between political actors from a sample of 107 politicians and candidates from April 1 to May 15 2022
Chart No. 7

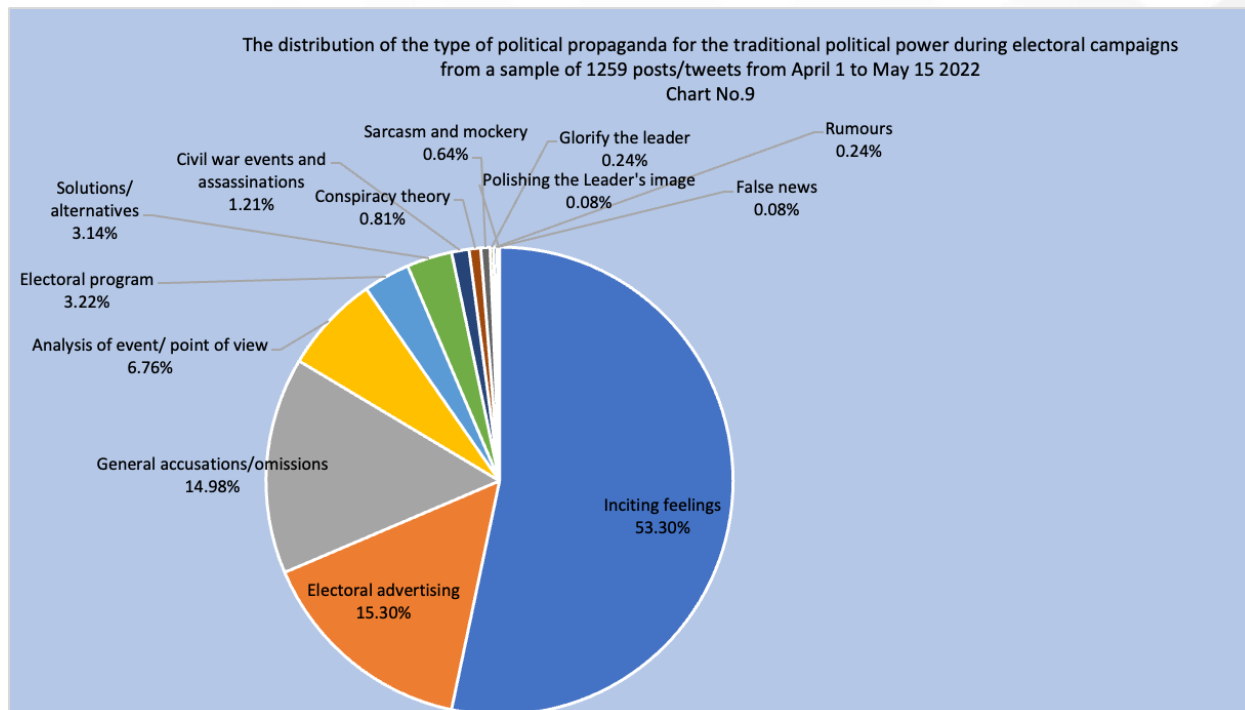


- Distribution between the type of political propaganda of the emerging political forces during the electoral campaigns. The sample is from 684 posts/tweets from April 1 to May 15, 2022.

The distribution of the type of political propaganda for the emerging political power during electoral campaigns from a sample of 684 posts/tweets from April 1 to May 15 2022
Chart No.8



- Distribution between the type of political propaganda of the traditional political forces during the electoral campaigns. The sample is from 1259 posts/tweets from April 1 to May 15, 2022.



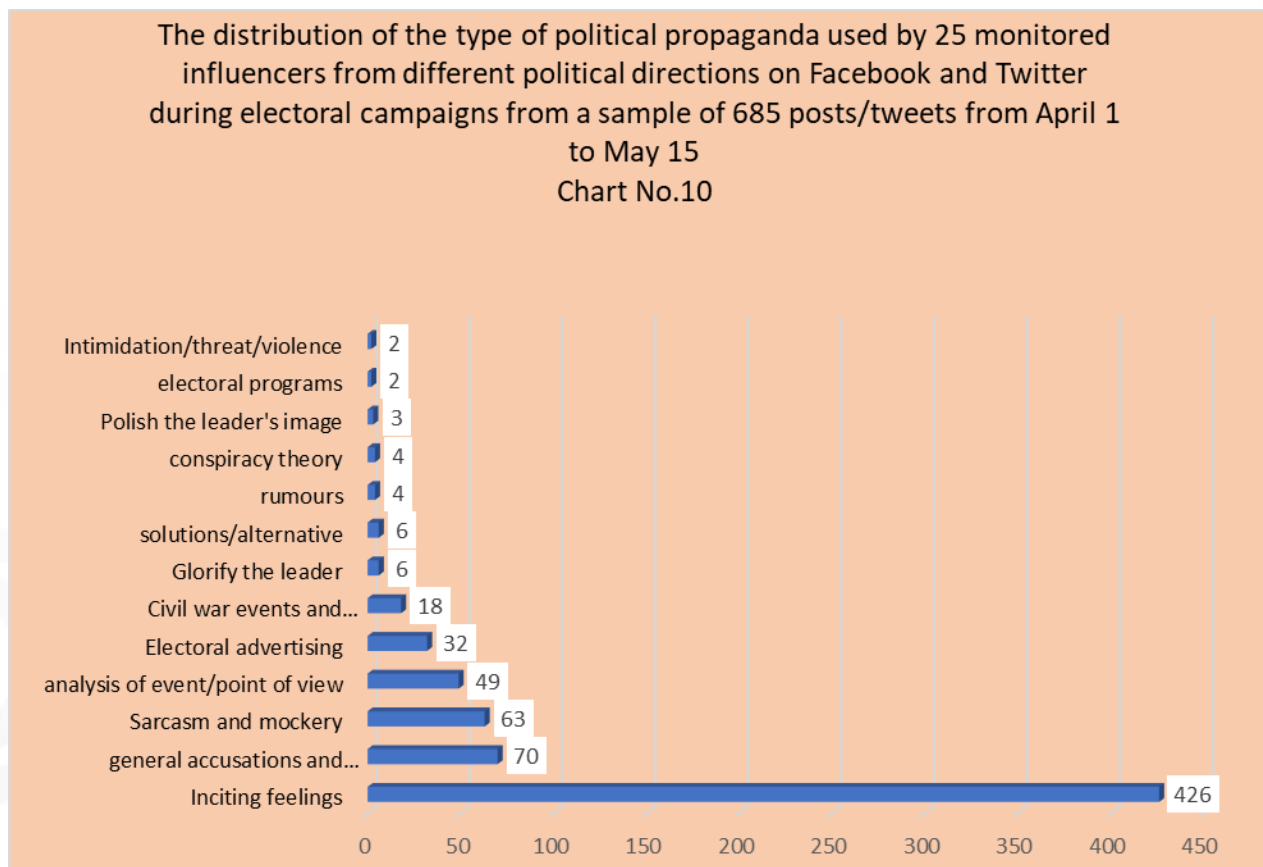
The following includes important conclusions that can be drawn from the comparison of the foundations of political propaganda when it comes to the political discourse between the two sides, traditional and emerging political forces during the electoral campaigns, from tables No. 8 and 9 above:

- It turns out that the traditional political forces relied to a greater extent on the rhetoric of inciting feelings and trying to tighten partisan and sectarian nerves.
- The discourse of political propaganda based on generalization and holding responsibility for the collapse through general accusations and omissions directed at the opponents formed an important part of the discourse among the traditional political forces that were divided between the camps of what was previously known as the March 8 and March 14 forces.
- Emerging political forces focused in their political discourse on electoral propaganda which is about 31% of their total monitored discourse, compared to 15% for traditional political forces and focused on electoral programs with 8% compared to 3% for traditional political forces.
- On the other hand, the political discourse of the traditional forces based on providing solutions and alternatives scored about 3%, compared to less than 2% for the emerging political forces.
- Foundations of political propaganda for influencers:

The political discourse of 25 influential figures with multiple partisan and political directions

The type of political propaganda used by influencers on social media, Facebook and Twitter, according to the monitored sample of 685 posts/tweets during the electoral campaigns from April 1 to May 15, was distributed as follows (see chart No. 6):

- The percentage of political propaganda by influencers based on a speech that stirs feelings is 62% of the total political discourse on Twitter and Facebook.
- The critical discourse based on irony, sarcasm and personal analysis of the course of events came in second place with a rate of 16.3%, compared to less than 1% for the discourse based on providing solutions and alternatives.
- Third position came the political propaganda discourse based on accusations and general omissions against the system and the political authority and the call for accountability with 10%.
- The political discourse led by influencers that is based on the memory of the war reached 2.6%, exceeding the percentage of candidates and politicians. As well 1.3% of their recorded political discourse showed to glorify political leaders and whiten their image.
- Less than half a percent of influencers recorded a speech based on intimidation, threats and violence, while this type of speech was not detected among the sample of candidates and politicians monitored on Twitter and Facebook.



Topics of the political discourse

C- Topics of the political discourse led by political actors on social media: Chart No. 8

In addition to the political discourse related to electoral campaigns by 107 political actors among the registered candidates and politicians, which amounted to 47.5%, the issue of corruption constituted an essential material for political propaganda, amounting to 15%. 5.9% of the monitored political discourse criticized the performance of opponents and officials in dealing with specific issues, and political actors allocated 5.6% of their discourse to issues related to the financial and economic system, 5% to the issue of neutrality and sovereignty, and 5.4% of their political discourse to raise issues related to expatriates and the Lebanese diaspora. This was followed by 2.41% for development and job opportunities, and 2.31% for governance issues and state building and institutions. Political actors dealt with issues related to social justice and human rights, as well as the issue of energy with a rate of 2% each, the port explosion with 1.4%, security issues with 0.6%, and decentralization with 0.4%. Education, the environment, the siege, sanctions and the displaced were issues raised with 0.25%, while the issue of women's participation and empowerment was 0.1%. It was noteworthy that the largest percentage and the main focus of the political discourse of the emerging political forces was attributed to the issues of social justice and human rights.

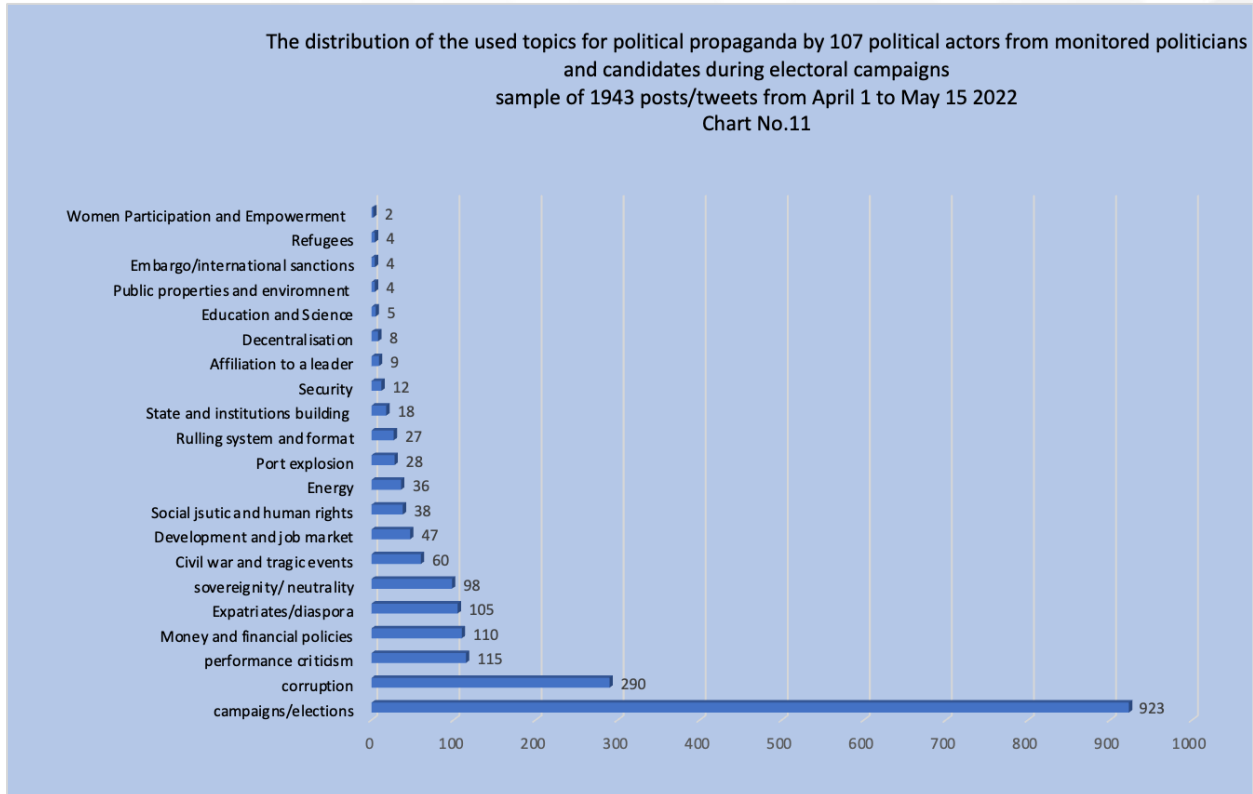
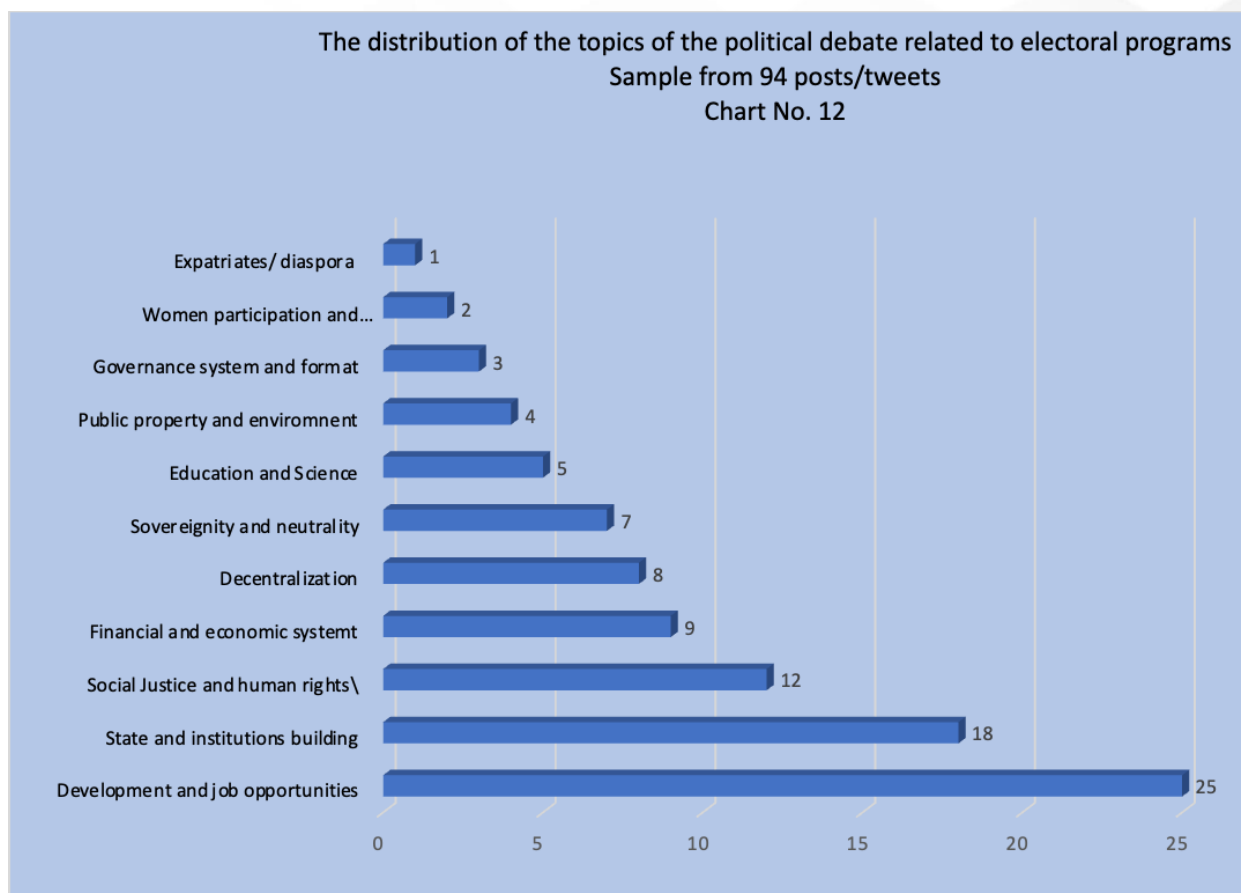


Chart No. 11 shows how the topics of political discourse related to the candidates’ electoral programs were distributed on social media, where the issue of development and job opportunities was the most prominent one, followed by the issue of building the state and institutions, including legislative reforms and the independence of the judiciary, followed by issues related to social justice, human rights, and the financial and economic system. The issue of decentralization, neutrality, and sovereignty came as part of the electoral programs presented, in addition to issues such as education, the environment, the participation of women and expatriates in a smaller percentage.



Corruption and collective memory

D- The content of the political discourse related to issues of corruption and collective memory.

The two issues of corruption and collective memory emerged in the analysis of the content of the political discourse of the monitored sample of candidates and party officials. The two topics are of different importance and carry diverse dimensions. The issue of corruption, considering its prevalence and transformation into a social phenomenon, is now alleged by everyone to be the main factor for the collapse and has turned into an essential material in political discourse, as shown by chart No. 8 and used by all parties in different ways.

The issue of collective memory, which has become burdened with the successive accumulations of events, and has become the center of political discourse, as politicians use it with the aim of stirring feelings and accusing opponents and re-eliciting conflicts, images and tragedies of the civil war and assassinations, and placing them in a current political context that stimulates previous events which might trigger the public. This formed the most prominent types of political propaganda from the monitored sample of candidates and politicians, as shown in Chart No. 5 above.

- Corruption as material for political discourse:

The monitoring team kept track of the tweets and posts of 107 candidates and politicians belonging to different political parties competing in the 2022 parliamentary elections, and during the months of April and May, the team monitored about 290 political discourses on their Twitter and Facebook accounts related to corruption.

It is remarkable that the issue of corruption is repeated in the discourse of actors in public affairs in several directions and ways, and the political forces have approached the issue of corruption in their political discourse through different angles. Most notably:

A- Judiciary and corruption

Some candidates talked about losing hope in accountability due to the rampant corruption in the state's structure, including the subordination of some judges to politicians, which makes the action of reform very difficult. Candidate Antoine Habashi of the Lebanese Forces Party commented in a [tweet](#): "There is a judge affiliated with President Aoun and a judge affiliated with President Berri, and you want to demand accountability!"

Candidate Bilal Abdullah commented in a [tweet](#): "Odd are the decisions of the State Shura Council, when it comes to media and education, and to many files in several ministries and departments... All of them come upon the request. The Supreme Judicial Council must act!"

Meanwhile, Hezbollah's candidate Hussein Hajj Hassan acquitted his political team by his pledge to fight corruption in the state by putting the blame on the institutions concerned with combating financial corruption in the state. And he said in a [tweet](#): All the documents that were with Hezbollah.. were given to the media, the Audit Bureau and the Financial Public Prosecution #staying_to_Protect_and_Build".

The candidate Halima Kaakour stated that the judiciary is unable to perform its duties due to structural reasons, and considered that the corrupted authority has made the judiciary a prisoner of its own hands. And then she [tweeted](#): they blew up our port, they stole our deposits, they destroyed our economy, attacked us with sticks and weapons....and the judiciary is captive of the #corrupted_authority. The law of the independence of the judiciary should be established, raise your voice and let your voice speak."

Candidate Fouad Makhzoumi [tweeted](#), "The illegal weapon has exercised its control over the judiciary and security services, most of which have become politicized."

B - The political system and corruption

Others addressed the issue of corruption from the approach of the corruption of the political system, as candidate Elias Hanakash of the Kataeb Party said in a [tweet](#), "We must hold accountable those responsible for the crisis we are experiencing, which is the ruling system."

The head of the Lebanese Forces Party, Samir Geagea, [rejected](#) the persistence of "this system that deprived the good citizen of his rights and gave absolute freedom to the corrupt and the criminal." As for the Free Patriotic Movement's candidate, Simon Abi Ramia, he [considered](#) that "the reasons for the collapse have become clear to everyone, and it is the corrupt, historical multi-sided system that has controlled our lives."

In an opposite speech, Ibrahim Kanaan of the Free Patriotic Movement stated in a [tweet](#), "They are running against the system, and they are the system that brought us to where we are." While candidate Ousama Saad of the Nasserist Popular Organization considered in a [tweet](#) that "our battle is with the rulers...". And in another [tweet](#), "all the parties of the authority bear the responsibility for all the collapse and crises that the country is going through, and we have rejected the system that practices all forms of oppression, and we must hold it accountable in the elections because it has committed crimes against the Lebanese."

The candidate, Ousama Saad, of the Nasserite Popular Organization, associated the deteriorating conditions of the citizens to the ruling political system. As for candidate Wiam Wahhab, he explicitly specified who in the political system bears direct responsibility for the collapse, in a [tweet](#) as a response to candidate Taymour Jumblatt, "People's rights have been eaten up by the militias that have dominated authority, ministries and institutions for thirty years." Candidate Faysal Karamah commented in a tweet: "For thirty years, we have been robbed, looted and neglected our economy and social security."

The founder of the Sawa lilubnan Movement, Bahaa El-Din Hariri, stated in a [tweet](#) that the system's corruption had destroyed the foundations of the state, saying, "Once again, we mourn a failed, unsuccessful, deficient state inattentive to people's concerns! May God help Lebanon with such a system!" While candidate Salim Saadeh of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party [addressed](#) the voters with a "voice of truth in the face of the thieves of the structure," candidate Lucien Bou Rjeili considered in a [tweet](#) that the option of confrontation he presented "in the face of the oligarchs, of sect leaders who destroyed our lives, stole our savings, blew up our capital, displaced our companions, our loved ones and still proceed to squander our basic rights."

As for the candidate, Paulette Yacoubian, she considered that this system divides the roles among themselves in order to reproduce itself, as she said in a [post](#) on Facebook, "Everyone is complicit in this game and continues, they want to make it look like they are divided just so they can elect the same president and continue the same performance.#enough_playing_people" As for the candidate, Gebran Bassil, head of the Free Patriotic Movement, he disavowed the regime by stating in a [tweet](#), "The biggest example that we are not part of the regime is the issue of Riad Salameh, whom they protect in exchange for certain services."

As for candidate Sami Gemayel, he stated in a [tweet](#) that there is a triple responsibility that created the state's failure: the corruption of the political system, the influence of Hezbollah and

the monetary policy of the Banque du Liban. And candidate Mark Daou stated in a [tweet](#) that the internal corruption that disrupts our daily lives is protected by Hezbollah's weapons."

D- Using corruption as a promotional element

The issue of corruption has turned into a door for political propaganda, given that all parties use it in their discourse, accusing their opponents of being behind it while they absolve themselves of it. Therefore, this topic is repeated in the speeches of all actors in public affairs. It seems necessary for the political parties to declare their integrity and innocence of the collapse and to hold the other parties responsible for it. Dribbling, obstruction, slander, mismanagement and waste of public money were an essential element in the exchange of accusations for the purpose of propaganda.

The head of the Lebanese Forces Party, Samir Geagea, stated in a [tweet](#) that the alliance between current the current state and "Hezbollah" is determined to destroy the remaining institutions in the Republic "after destroying the country and sending it to Hell." He called on the people of Batroun to hold Gebran Bassil accountable for the damage done to all the Lebanese, at least in the energy file, which cost the Lebanese \$40 billion in debt and transformed the state into a farm.

The Free Patriotic Movement's candidate, Ibrahim Kanaan [tweeted](#), attacking the Lebanese Forces party: "They cried and gathered to set up deals, and we struggled to reform the public finances, and if they cooperated with us, we would have prevented the collapse, as for us, we wanted to, and we worked for it". While candidate Bilal Abdullah mentioned in a [tweet](#) that "one of the wonders of the Bisri Dam deal, is that the state paid 40 million dollars to the Turkish contractor, i.e. to the subcontractor, in exchange for works, of which only a few have been implemented."

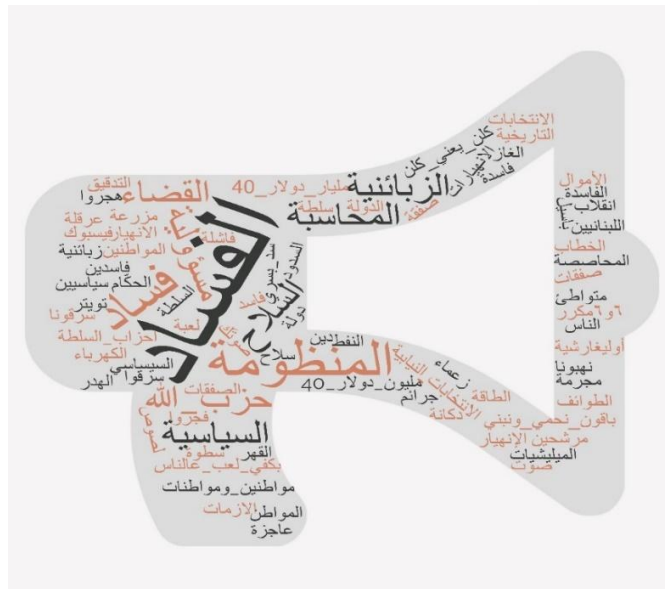
As for the Lebanese forces' candidate Pierre Bou Assi, he attacked in a [tweet](#) Hezbollah's performance in the ministries they received, "especially the Ministry of Agriculture, contrary to the slogans they launched for agricultural jihad across rooftops and balconies."

Candidate Gebran Bassil responded to the corruption charges his opponents accused him of and [tweeted](#): "Their project is to sabotage electricity, sabotage dams, obstruct gas and oil extraction, obstruct the recovery plan, prevent financial recovery, prevent auditing, prevent, prevent, prevent... their project is darkness." As for the candidate, George Okais of the Lebanese Forces, he announced in a [tweet](#) responding to the Free Patriotic Movement that "we did not let u continue with theft, corruption, waste and deals." Meanwhile, candidate Jamil Al-Sayed, in a tweet, appealed to the Public Prosecution to move to prosecute the Ministers of Communications, as it was mentioned in the Audit Bureau report that they were implicated in wasting 6 billion dollars of public money in the cellular sector.

And independent candidate Josephine Zughaib stated in a [tweet](#), "We didn't come to this by chance there is a recurring corrupt group of 6 by. #All_means_All. They made the country a

shop, they turned into quotas, and they saw us as customers, not #citizens.” While the independent candidate, Riad Al-Asaad, [considered](#) that "it is not possible to build a strong society worthy based on clientelism," criticizing in a tweet the state of control in the south.

As indicated by the previous tables, a group of political actors used in their political discourse direct accusations and general omissions related to corruption issues without specifying a specific file or entity. The accusations are many and repetitive, without any follow-up or documentation of these cases, so they seem merely used to promote and criticize the opponent.



1- Collective memory as a tool in the political discourse:

Monitoring the political discourse of the 107 candidates and politicians during the months of April and May revealed about 60 political discourses on their Twitter and Facebook accounts related to the collective memory.

<p>Collective memory: the sum total of events, experiences, influences and legacies that marked the history of a social and political component and contributed to the formation of individual and collective identity.</p>

It is notable that the issue of collective memory is repeated in the discourse of actors in public affairs on several occasions, including what is related to commemorating an annual anniversary of the events of conflicts and assassinations that Lebanon has known, and others related to digging up the political and security past of opponents to use it as a material to attack the opponent in politics in order to influence his electoral campaign and stir feelings among the groups concerned with the respective discourse. Containing what is related to the collective

identity and political participation of the different components that make up the Lebanese society. The use of the mentioned discourse in different frameworks was divided as follows:

- a. Recalling anniversaries related to collective memory
- B. Using the political and security past of opponents to attack them
- c. Stirring up collective memory related to identity and political participation

a. Recalling anniversaries related to collective memory

Some candidates and politicians recalled events with specific dates that left a major mark in the collective memory. Every year, the anniversary of the events of May 7, 2008 is an occasion to attack Hezbollah and its allies. Representative Roula Al-Tabsh from the Future Movement, the party that is boycotting the parliamentary elections, [tweeted](#) that "May 7 is one of the ominous dates in the memory of the Lebanese. And it constituted a turning point, as illegal weapons took over Beirut," considering that this incident came three years after the assassination of the martyr Rafik Hariri, as a prelude to Lebanon's annexation of the Persian axis.

The founder of the Sawa lilubnan movement, Bahaa El-Din Hariri, commented on the anniversary of May 7 in a [tweet](#), "So that this tragedy does not happen again and our capital Beirut is not attacked again, vote! Vote against the Iranian militias, against the haters of Beirut and against the project that aims to change the face of the capital and Lebanon." " As for Saad Hariri, he recalled this memory with short words, tweeting: "May 7th... a black day. We will not forget."

While the candidate of the Free Nasserite Movement, Ziyad Al-Agouz associating in his [tweet](#), what happened on May 7 to the weakness of the Sunni street, which its guardians provided them with toys (instead of weapons for self-defense), recalling a statement attributed to the martyr Rafik Hariri, "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a weapon for a weapon, and the initiator is unjust," stating to recall this period and prepare.

As for the candidate Ghiath Yazbek from the Lebanese Forces, he stated in a [tweet](#) that the Lebanese live the 7th of May events every day through Hezbollah's control of the institutions and the discreet coverage of some of this project.

As for the anniversary of April 13, 1975, there are several tweets and different approaches among the political discourse, including those glorifying the sacrifices of the martyrs (the first martyr Joseph Bou Assi) and those who fell for the sake of sovereignty, preservation of the state and partnership in the face of those who neglected it according to a [tweet](#) by candidate Pierre Bou Assi. And another calls for the protection of civil peace through partnership, equality and dialogue according to a [tweet](#) by Gebran Bassil, head of the Free Patriotic Movement, stressing

that this is the approach of his party, that they live by everyday so that April 13 will not be repeated. As for the head of the Future Movement, Saad El Hariri [tweeted](#) on the anniversary of April 13, 1975, saying that the suffering of the Lebanese people is repeated on this anniversary with different aspects, saying, "We will not forget...". While the head of the Lebanese Forces party, tweeted, "We remember it. Others want to bring it back." Referring to Hezbollah and the events of Tayouneh. As for the candidate of the Islamic Group, Imad Al-Hout, he [tweeted](#) that this memory "turned all the Lebanese into victims we remember today in order to restore our responsibility towards our homeland."

As for the candidate, Jestel Semaan of the opposition National Bloc Party, she urged in a [tweet](#) to learn that "militias, warlords and sellers of the homeland are the opposite of freedoms, the state and the institutions." She demands the practice of critical thinking to get to the real change. The candidate, Nemat Fram, also mentioned in a [tweet](#) on this anniversary that the wars against him are still ongoing against the Lebanese people, calling on the voters to change the course before it is too late.

On the anniversary of the Armenian massacres on April 24, candidate Josephine Zugheib stressed in a [tweet](#), "The right of the Armenian cause and the necessity of recognizing the genocide... and we will remain bearers of the cause in our political battle." Meanwhile, candidate Joseph Najm of the Marada Party confirmed in a [tweet](#), "Recognizing the Armenian massacres is a sacred right."

The anniversary of the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon on April 26 also had an impact on the political discourse that was used by candidates and politicians in different contexts, including those who speculate again about the will of the people who freed the country of the Syrian occupation that lasted for 30 years, by surprising Hezbollah on their anniversary and prepare a surprise for them in the upcoming elections, as stated in the [tweet](#) of candidate Pierre Bou Assi. As for the head of the Kataeb Party, candidate Sami Gemayel, he stated in a [tweet](#) that the experience of resisting the Syrian occupation "taught us not to surrender or compromise, and that despite how great or long a challenge might be, our struggle will sprout sovereignty." The head of the Forces Party, Samir Geagea, [tweeted](#): "We resisted them from the beginning, and we will resist their plan until the last moment." Candidate Camille Mourani of the National Bloc published a [leaflet](#) in which he recalled the memory of the evacuation of the Syrian army, saying that "the battle against injustice is one, and that injustice will not last, and the oppressor, whether foreign or Lebanese, will leave, and there will be no return."

As for the candidate, Jamil Al-Sayed, he expressed in a [tweet](#) that the April 29 is the anniversary of his liberation from prison, along with his fellow officers, after the false witnesses' plot to falsely accuse the four officers and Syria was exposed. Accusing Saad Hariri, Mirza, Rifi and Al-Hassan of misleading the investigation into the assassination of Rafik Hariri.

b. Recalling images and events from the past to tighten tension or attack political opponents

Others approached the issue of collective memory in terms of recalling images and events from the past to be used to attack opponents. Candidate Pierre Bou Assi of the Lebanese Forces party mentioned in a [tweet](#) that his party had turned the page on the war through the “Jabal” Reconciliation that was sponsored by Patriarch Sfeir, attacking the head of the Free Patriotic Movement, Gebran Bassil, saying that: "He did not skip the "war page" and reopens it on every occasion. Basil insists on reopening wounds as it happened in the tomb of Shmoun."

In a counter-speech attacking the Lebanese Forces, Gebran Bassil, head of the Free Patriotic Movement, stated in a [tweet](#), "In the war, they were the ones responsible for displacement, and today the ones with the financing hands! During the war they hit our society with gunpowder, and during peace they beat it with political money."

Candidate Sami Gemayel attacked Hezbollah's weapons in his [tweet](#), recalling that: "We have seen nothing of weapons but scourges from the days of the Palestinians to Hezbollah. Any weapon that does not come under the control of the state is a factor of instability." And he continued his speech [calling](#) his supporters and mentioning the martyrs Pierre Gemayel, Gebran Toueini, Antoine Ghanem, Walid Eido and others who fell because they refused to lay hands on the country. Praying not to give up.

In another [tweet](#), candidate Salim al-Sayegh of the Kataeb Party stated, addressing his electoral audience in Kesrouan Jbeil and attacking his political opponents, "Yesterday you prevented the Jerusalem road from passing through here, so do not make Jounieh today a foothold for any greedy!" He considered that the current alliance with Hezbollah in this circle is "a betrayal of the 450 martyrs from this region who fell in 1975 to preserve Lebanon's identity!"

And candidate Fouad Makhzoumi, head of the Dialogue Party, [said](#), addressing the Sunni voter in Beirut while announcing his list, Beirut wants the heart, "Your voice decides: Beirut and its dignity, or the new May 7!"

The candidate Hussein Hajj Hassan from Hezbollah [tweeted](#) attacking what he described as the criminal history of the person responsible for the Tayouneh events: "Whoever votes for the list of the Lebanese Forces... he votes for the one responsible for the Tayouneh massacre, and who is responsible for a history of crime... and therefore he votes against Hezbollah and the resistance." ". The candidate, Gebran Bassil, from the Alliance of Forces and the Socialist party from the Mountain, [tweeted](#): "Don't let anyone fool you with electoral alliances, slander him directly with a question about his alliances. Ask the militia about his alliance with a militia that he was fighting, they fought, they displaced people, and now they are allies." As for the candidate Cesar Abi Khalil, he [tweeted](#): "He whose history is a militia has no right to criticize President Aoun, and I hope the "forces" stand by our side to build the state, and the Lebanese are aware."

Commenting on the visit of the head of the Free Patriotic Movement Gebran Bassil, to Akkar, candidate Muhammad Suleiman posted on his Facebook account, [stating](#): "Gebran Bassil, a sectarian strife moving in Shmoun grave and Bekaa, looking for grave and inciting the Lebanese against each other through hateful language, and today in Akkar. Whoever sells Lebanon's issues and its sovereignty for the sake of a chair must know that Akkar was and will remain the province of unified life and its only project is the state."

c. Stirring up collective memory related to identity and political participation

The issue of collective memory has turned into a political discourse that sends messages related to political participation, incites the feelings of specific groups among the Lebanese, and evokes fear and danger on identity.

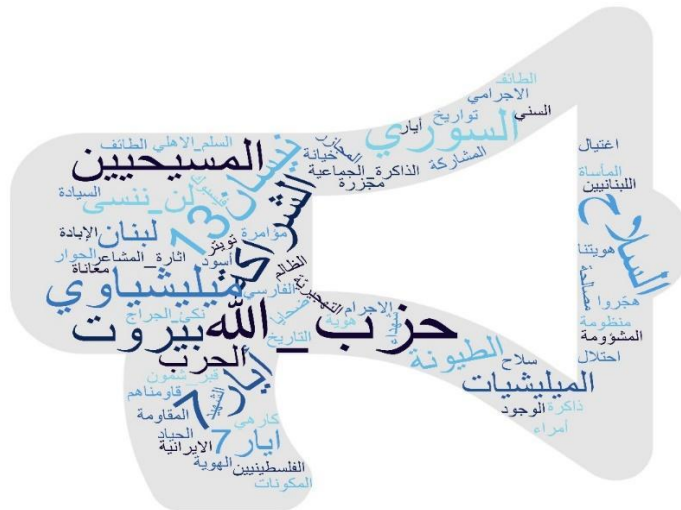
And candidate Michel Moawad [tweeted](#): "Our battle is against Hezbollah to defend our identity, to restore our abducted state, and against those who cover for Hezbollah, and to build a new Lebanon on the foundations of accountability and justice, and to topple the May 7 system."

Candidate Faysal Karamah mentioned in a [tweet](#): "We warned a lot, especially when it comes to the prime minister. It is true that this position is occupied by a Sunni Muslim, and after the Taif Agreement he became the head of the executive authority, but they continued to reduce this position to transform it from a representative of a major sect, then a party, then a movement, and they finally brought him to represent a person.!"

Candidate, Gebran Bassil [tweeted](#): "From Taif up until today, and in different ways, they stole the power of the Christian president."

As for the candidate, Nemat Afram, he mentioned in a [tweet](#) that it is true that the Christians of Lebanon were not slaughtered or beheaded, and if they were violated, they would resist and succeed, but they heavily migrated and whoever is left is getting slaughtered daily by the political system and the illegal weapon. And candidate Pierre Bou Assi [tweeted](#), addressing the Christian audience: "The most dangerous thing I heard today is President Aoun's speech in the Vatican about "Hezbollah" protecting Christians, as this removes Christians from partnership, neutrality and existence."

Candidate Fares Saeed, who raised the slogan against the Iranian occupation, [tweeted](#): "I call upon the people of Jbeil and Kesrouwan to be vigilant of the undertestament of some and the of help others to allow a deputy from Hezbollah in 2022 into the parliament, which will lead to the transformation of Hezbollah into the head of a list that includes 7 Maronites in 2026." "The value of the advice was huge"



2- The attitudes of the major political actors and its impact on general discourse

A- The direction of public discourse during electoral campaigns

The attitude of candidates and politicians during electoral campaigns was negative and adopted an escalatory behavior that exacerbated the conflict. The percentage of negative discourse reached 71% of the total observed political discourse, which amounted to 1,943 posts and tweets, as shown in Table No. 5 above. Negative speech and high-pitched attitude on the social media pages also sprung with violent hate speech.

A sample of the mentioned speech and its impact on social media pages:

A comparison between the speeches of the head of the Lebanese Forces party, Samir Geagea, and the head of the Free Patriotic Movement party.

The political discourse of Dr. Samir Geagea, head of the Lebanese Forces Party, adopted an escalating pattern in the face of the Free Patriotic Movement and its leader, Gebran Bassil, focusing on his alliance with Hezbollah and the damage that is inflicted on the Lebanese people and the state through a number of accusations and linking them to the reality in which we live.

Since January 30, with the start of the election campaigns, Geagea focused in his political speech on the fact that voting for the candidates and lists of the Free Patriotic Movement means voting for Hezbollah and their project that leading the Lebanese people to "hell." In his

[speech](#) during the memorial of the martyrs of Zahle on April 2, Geagea considered that the demons of "Assad" are still present, referring to Hezbollah and the Free Patriotic Movement.

An overview of the main points of Geagea's speech towards the Free Patriotic movement and Hezbollah:

On January 30: "Every vote that goes to the Free Patriotic Movement and Hezbollah means extending your pain with own hands without favor from anyone."

On March 17: "Any Lebanese who elects the "Free Patriotic Movement" means that, in practice, they elects Hezbollah."

On the 30th of March: we are living in "one hell created by a well-known source".

On April 2: if you elect the Free Patriotic Movement, it means that you are electing Hezbollah with all the consequences that result from this choice, meaning no sovereignty, no independence, no freedom, no constitution, and no law.

April 25: We will not allow anyone to keep us in Hell

On May 9: "Any vote you give to the Free Patriotic Movement, you give it directly to Hezbollah and to extend the crisis we are living in."

On May 10: "Every vote for any candidate from the Free Patriotic Movement's list in Beirut 1 is automatically for the benefit of Hezbollah and for the "real hell" we live in today." On May 14, "we want someone to take us out of Hell."

The speech of the head of the Lebanese Forces party, who is skeptical about the sovereign identity of the Free Patriotic Movement and the corruption of its leaders, was opposed with a speech by the head of the Free Patriotic Movement, Gebran Bassil, in which he targeted the mentality of the [militia](#) that is still controlling and working [abroad](#) with America, Israel and its allies.

The most important bits of what was stated in Bassil's speech to the Lebanese Forces:

April 9: In the war, they were responsible for displacement, and today they have the financing hands! During war they hit our society with gunpowder, and during peace they target it with political money

April 9: Political money is a project of destruction for our society and our country, and a war criminal leading is assassinating a homeland with strange money! Our battle is with this money agent

April 10: Samir Geagea succeeded in thwarting President Aoun's reign, and he is proud of it

April 29: We are the state and we are the legitimacy and they are the militia with their weapons and political work and their lies about expatriation in Australia and others and they are the militia with their daily lies in the media

29: Whoever killed army officers and soldiers on the walls after he betrayed them has no right to speak about sovereignty. These crimes cannot be erased from history, especially since there are those who have not yet asked for forgiveness and apology from the army.

May 12: Whoever votes for the forces will vote for Israel and its regional allies!

May 13: Whoever votes for the forces votes for ISIS and Israel! and "Whoever votes for the Lebanese forces votes for Israel."

B- The effect of political discourse on party supporters

- Repercussions of the political discourse of political leaders on social media

This political discourse of political leaders was reflected in campaigns on social media for each political group through the use of hashtags that express the state of political division and reflect the political propaganda promoted by each party. The hashtag "Vote for movement vote for Hell" was launched by supporters of the Lebanese Forces party in response to the campaign of the Free Patriotic Movement, "Voice for the movement is a voice for Lebanon".



This offensive [speech](#) was reflected on social media as treachery and accusations related to corruption and the renunciation of sovereignty and identity: "O Lebanese men and women, do not forget that as soon as General of destruction reached the presidency, the first thing he did was a naturalization decree that included Syrians affiliated with the Assad regime. If you love your identity, vote correctly"

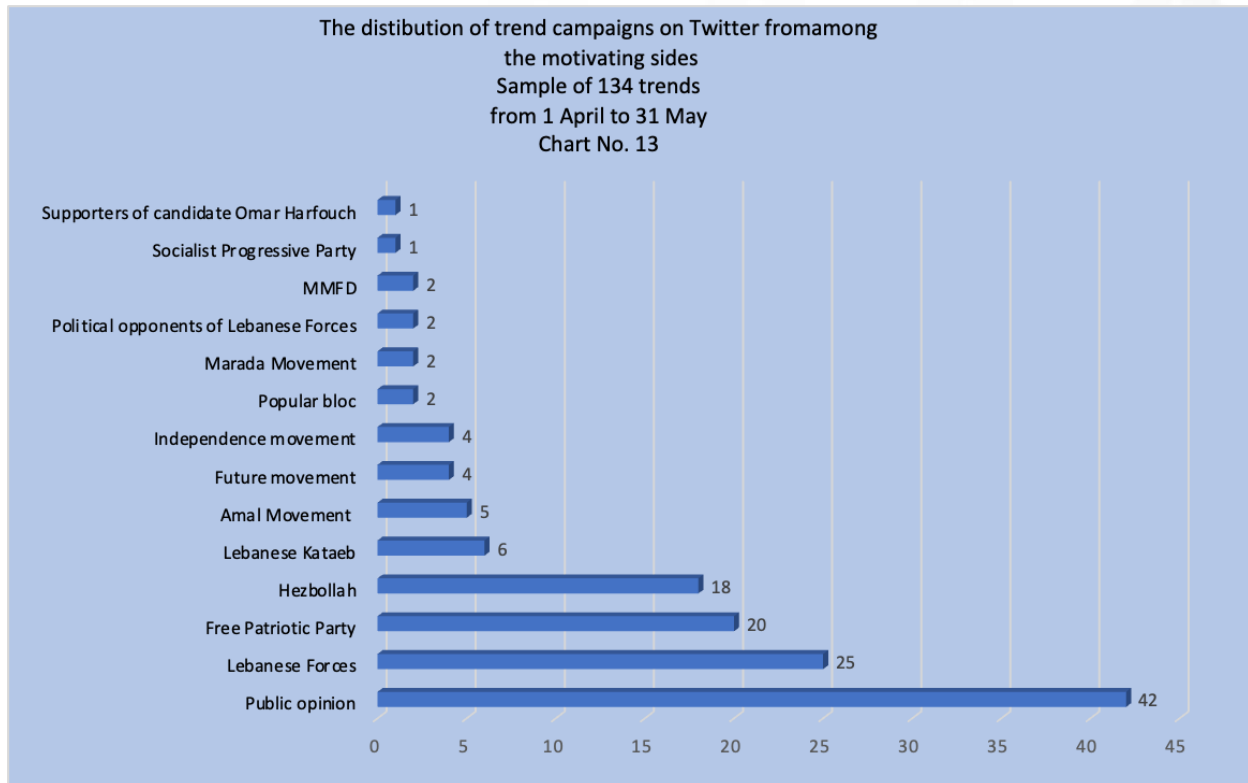
The speech was used on social media using hashtags that include treason and mistreatment of political opponents, such as #Geagea_a Zionist_project and #Geagea_an_Israeli_project.



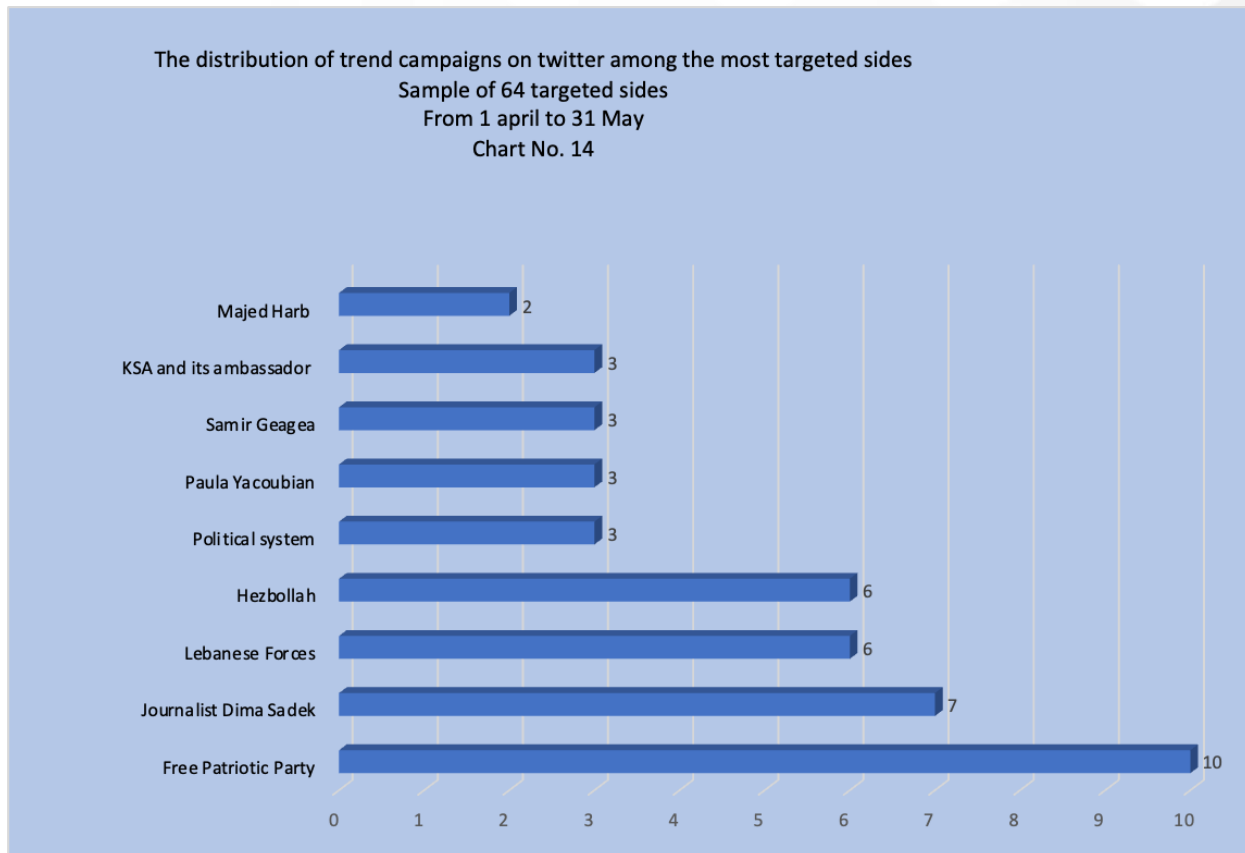
- Major trend campaigns that were launch on twitter

Between the first of April and May 31, 134 trend campaigns were monitored on Twitter, and by analyzing these campaigns, it was found that they came in different contexts, including partisan propaganda or related to events of interest to the public. The chart below shows that about 31% of the monitored Twitter trends captured the attention of the general public in discussion and interaction, and 69% of the trends on Twitter during the above-mentioned period were motivated by a partisan party or a particular political orientation. Among the political parties that stimulated the most popular hashtag/trend related to electoral campaigns, Lebanese

Forces activists came first (25 hashtags), followed by supporters of the Free Patriotic Movement (20 hashtags) and then Hezbollah (18 hashtags).



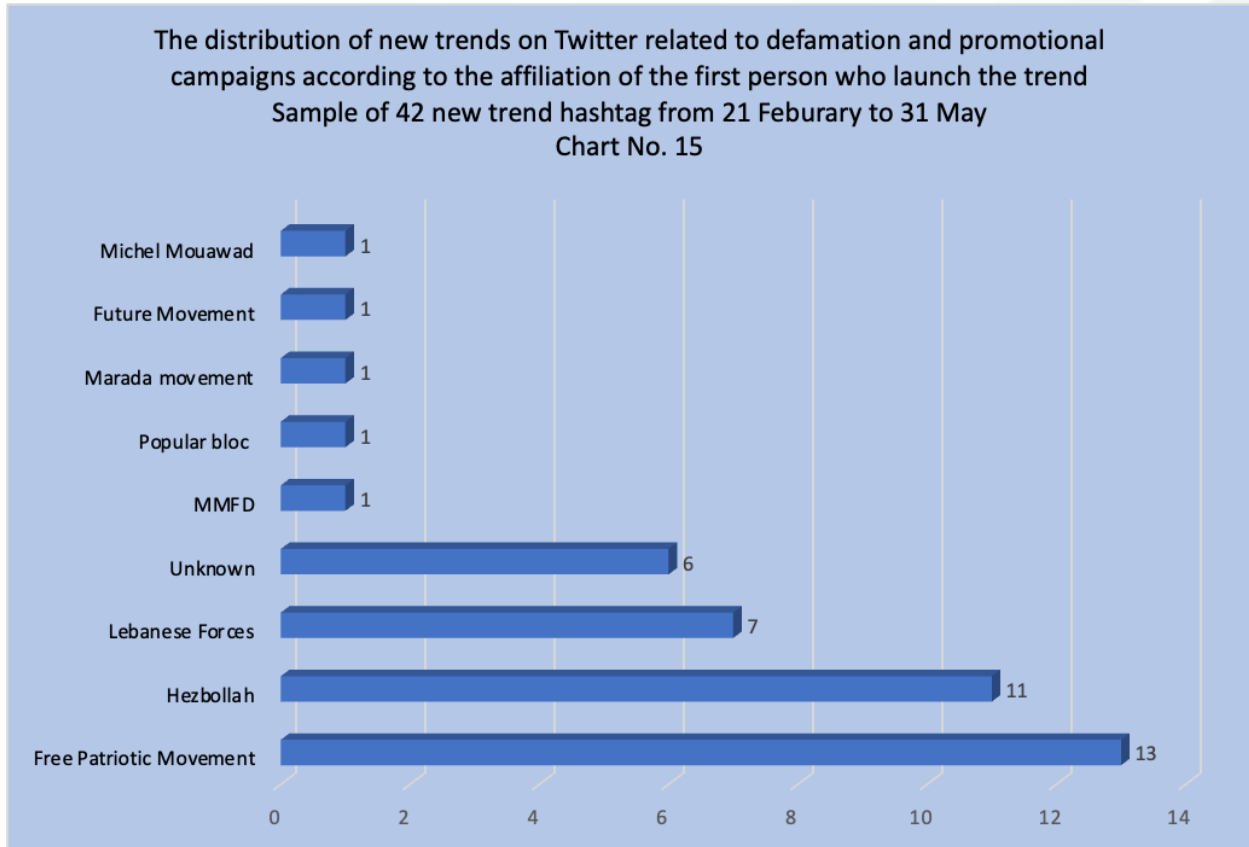
The large part of the campaigns, about half (64 hashtags/trends), which were launched on Twitter in the electoral context, aim to target personalities or a political group. The following chart shows that the Free Patriotic Movement is the most targeted by these campaigns (10 hashtags/trends), followed by the media personality Dima Sadek (7 hashtags/trends), then the Lebanese Forces and Hezbollah (6 trend hashtags for both sides).



- Analyzing the accounts that launched the hashtag for Trends on Twitter

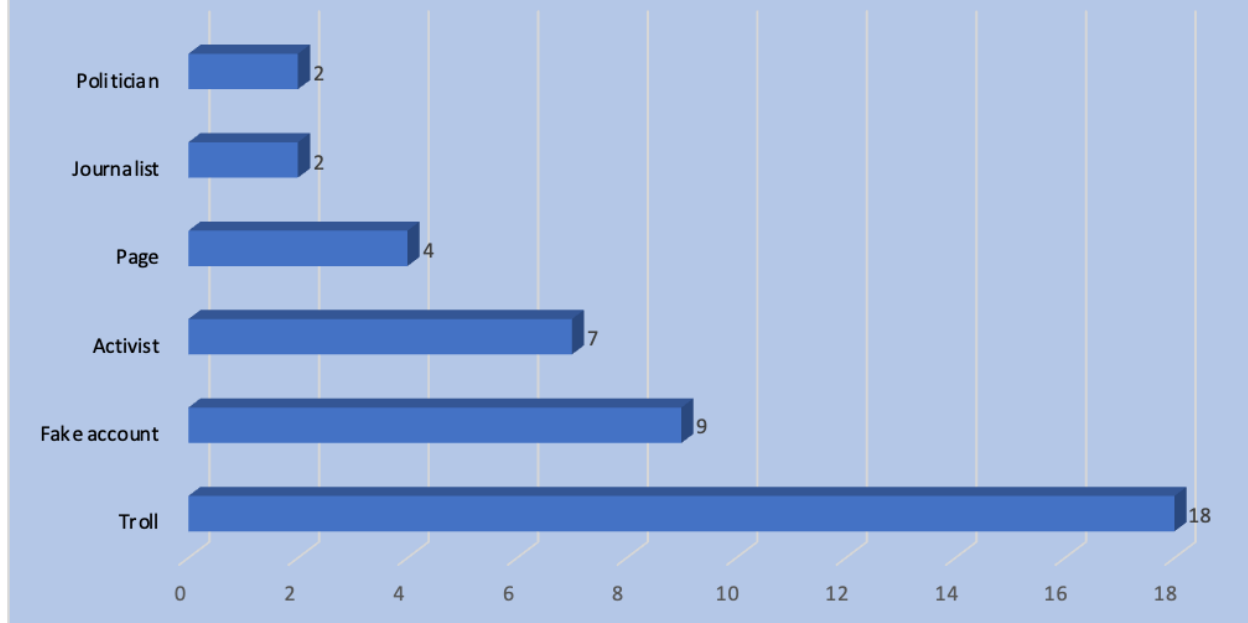
A new hashtag / trend group was monitored, launched during the electoral campaigns from February 21 to May 31, and the first account that launched the hashtag was identified before it was motivated by activists on Twitter. The content of these hashtags differed between promotional phrases for a political group, such as #from_the_expatriate_to_maarab, or #debate_not_theorizing, or attacking a specific group, such as the #false_revolution or #Baalbek_Free_Bukhari_out.

In the following, the table below shows the distribution of new trends on Twitter related to advertising campaigns and defamation, according to the apparent affiliation of the first person who launched them. And this sample included 42 new trends / hashtags.



The launch of a new hashtag/trend on Twitter during electoral campaigns was not limited to partisan units involved in political promotion and propaganda such as "trolls" who manage accounts that aim to promote political propaganda on a permanent basis, as well as false accounts that are created for specific purposes and periods of time. The chart below shows that active pages on social media, including those that provide political or social content, journalists and politicians, participated in launching hashtag / trend campaigns before they were motivated by activists on Twitter. Here, it is mentioned that candidate Gebran Bassil, head of the Free Patriotic Movement party, launched the first hashtag #False_Revolution in a [tweet](#).

The distribution of accounts that launched the hashtags for new campaigns according to the apparent state of the account's activity from a sample of 42 accounts from 21 February to 31 May
Chart No. 16

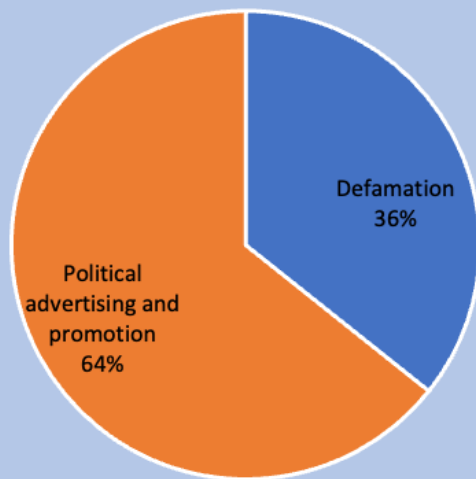


False accounts were used to launch campaigns on Twitter for political promotion to attract votes, such as #Boycott_at_your_service, which is a political message addressed to the Sunni voter who supports the team of former Prime Minister Saad Hariri, who suspended his political team's activity as including the candidacy and electoral process of his during the parliamentary elections. Or for defamation and slander, such as #story_of_Paula_Yacoubian_list and the accusations leveled against her and her colleagues in the list of stealing the revolution.

Date	Date joined	Follower s	Tweets per week	Retweet ratio	Bot rating	Role
21feb - 2.20pm	Dec 2021	0	1.5	0	4.8	Fake User
Feb - 11:30 24	Feb 2020	234	1.3	51%	1.8	Fake User
feb - 7:55 25 pm	Oct 2021	25	22	0%	4.5	Fake User
mar - 10:34 6 pm	Feb 2022	20	3.4	25%	4.5	Fake User
apr - 22 4:00pm	Mar 2018	512	0.33	85%	4.4	Fake User
apr - 7:49 23 pm	Mar 2018	81	5.3	0%	4.4	Fake User
feb - 25 12:38pm	Mar 2022	178	19	55%	4	Fake User
may - 8 10:30am	Jul 2012	33	0.22	15%	3.4	Fake User
may - 8 11:35am	Feb 2022	61	2.7	0%	4.3	Fake User

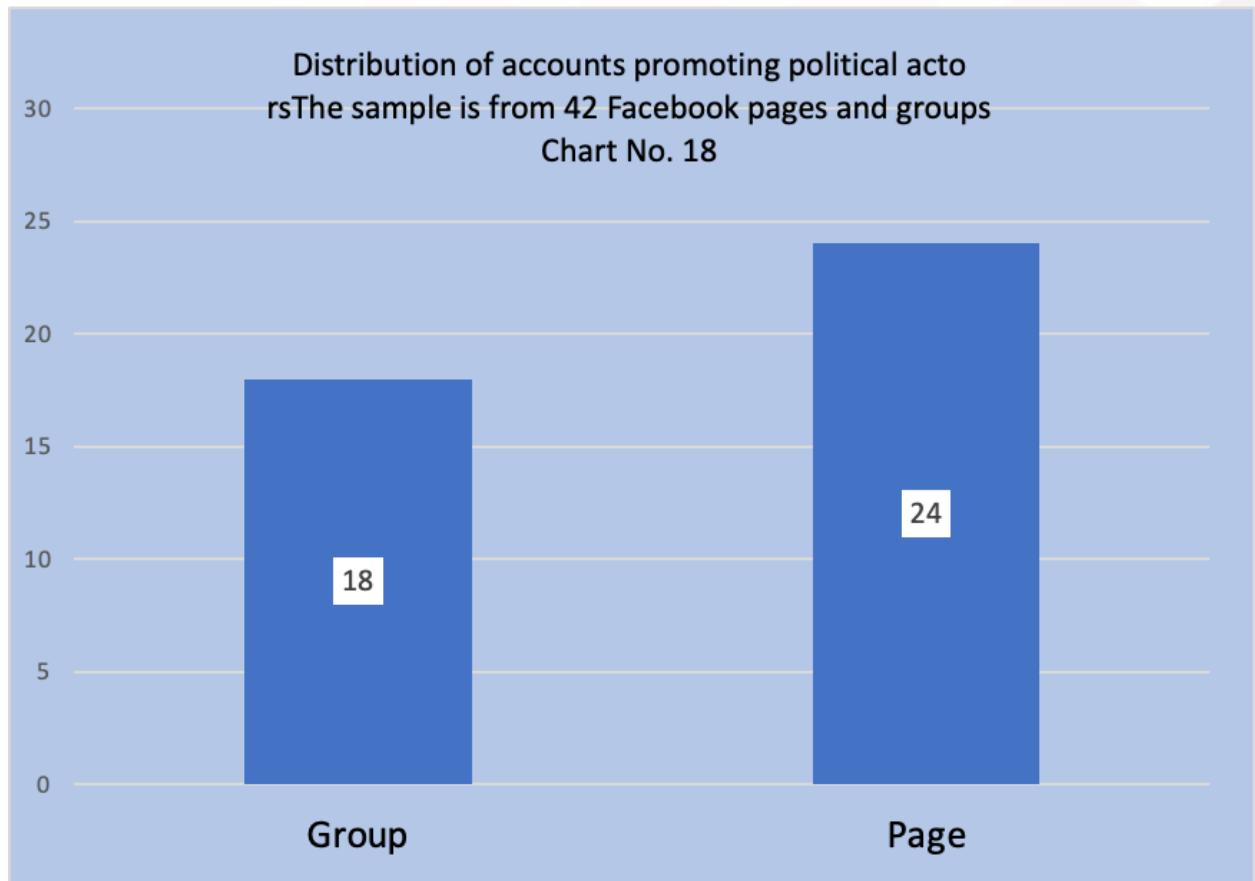
The campaigns launched on Twitter that were ranked as trend / hashtag from February 21 to May 31, were distributed among 36% as defamation campaigns and 64% aimed at political promotion.

The distribution of new trends on twitter related to promotional campaigns and defamation
Sample of 42 new trend hashtag
from 21 February to 31 May
Chart No. 17

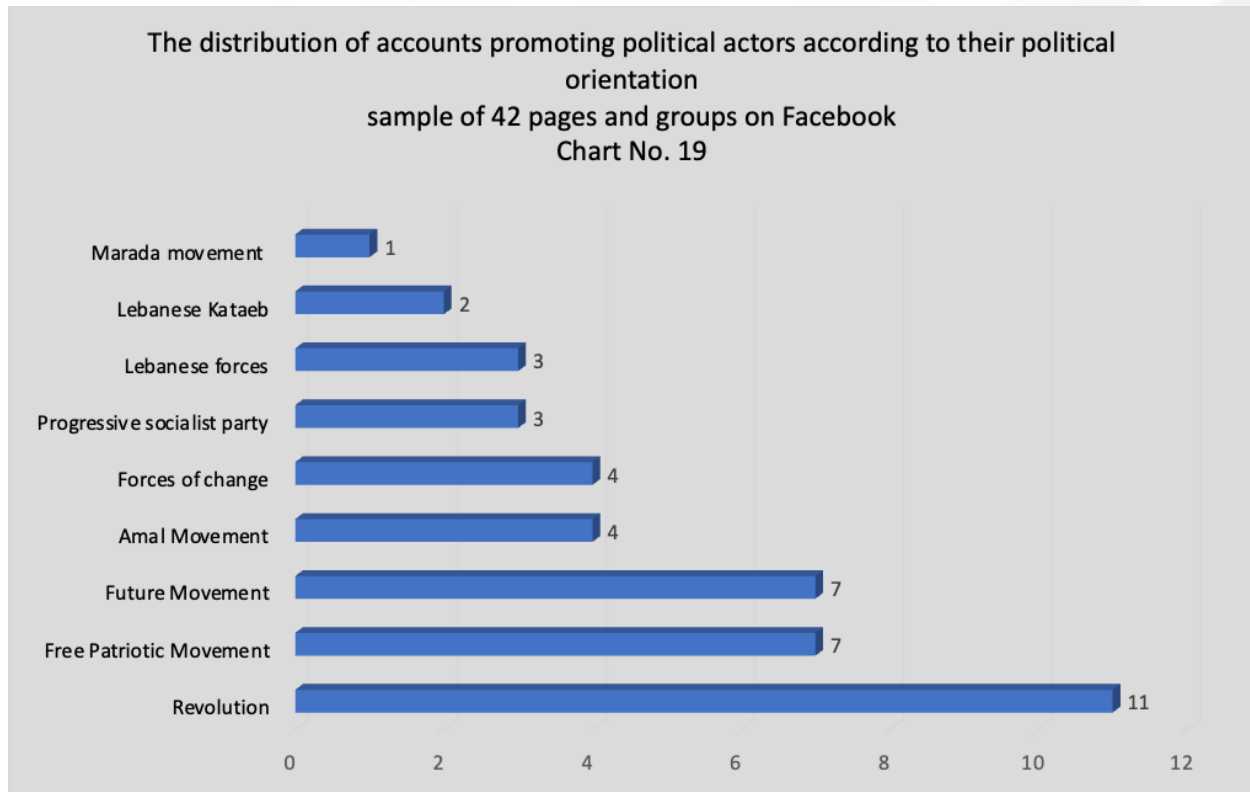


3. The political discourse of the pages and groups promoting political parties and forces on Facebook

42 pages and groups on Facebook, including for groups promoting opposition parties and revolutionary and change forces, were monitored. It was found that these pages become active in parallel with electoral campaigns and political positions.



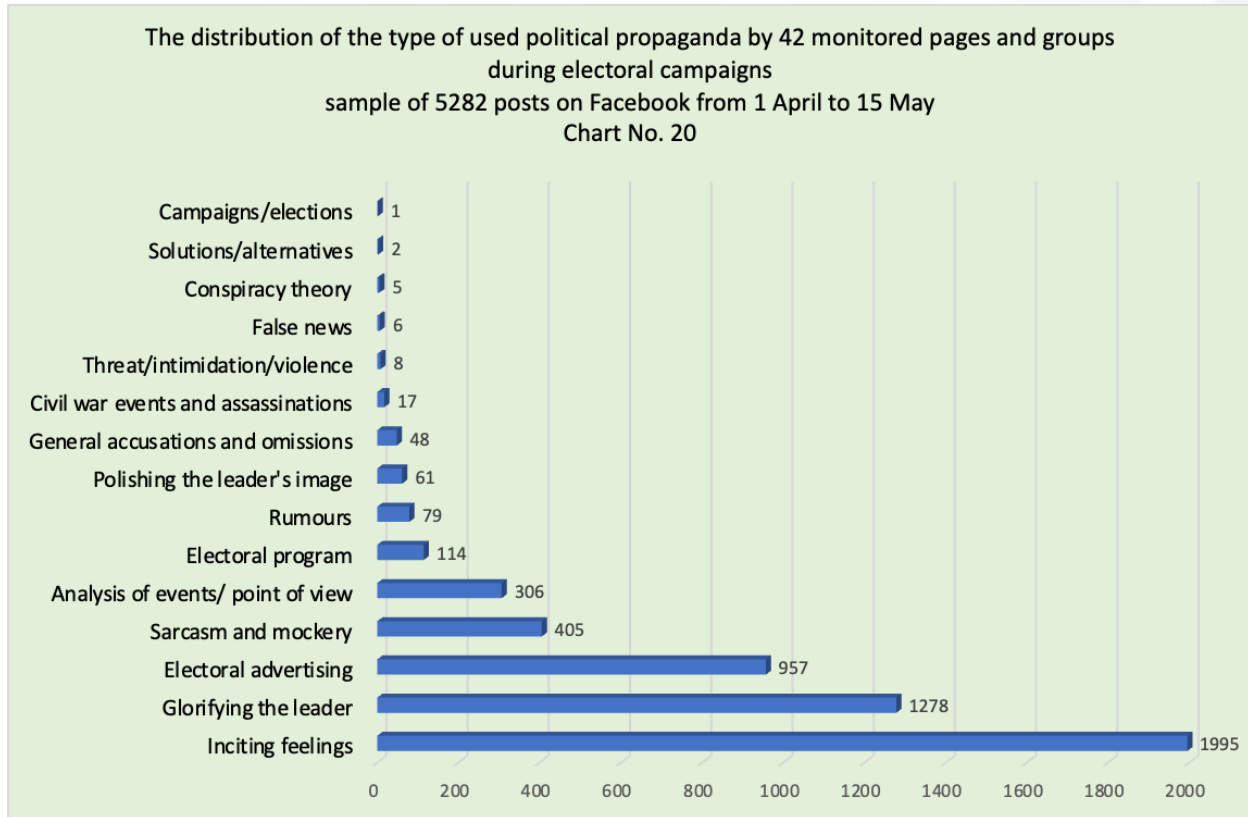
What are these monitored pages and their political orientations?



What kind of political advertising is the political discourse of these pages and groups promoting political actors based on?

The chart below shows that about 38% of the political advertising of the 42 Facebook pages and groups that was monitored and promoted by political actors, is of the kind that incites feelings (refer to the definition above). While the type of political propaganda related to the promotion of political actors (glorifying a leader, electoral advertisement, polishing the leader's image) took first place with 43%, and this indicates that the main role of these pages and groups on Facebook is, on the one hand, promoting a particular political group, and on the other hand, insulting and defaming political opponents.


It also appears from the chart below that these pages and groups contribute to spreading rumors, as the promotion of 79 rumors and six false news between April 1 and May 15 were detected, which is 1.6% of the monitored total of circulating publications.



What are the most prominent rumors and their intentions?

The subject of these rumors can be categorized as follows:

Rumors that aim to damage the reputation of the candidate and make him appear in a bad image

Pages promoting the traditional political force	Pages promoting the revolution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Do you know which region is trying to bring electricity to its region? Gibran Bassil sends a threat to the contractor or whoever wants to work on lighting the area. And he wants you to have electricity 24/7 ● The exchange took place through WhatsApp, as one of the people who work closely with the former minister, Wiam Wahhab, conveyed what he described as a state of great concern, after he began to feel the fact that he would not reach the parliamentary symposium, as he gave offered who reviewed the information that he would win, to discover that it was a lie because all his tricks failed. ● Nehmat Frem bargained for the payment of school fees in exchange for securing 4 preferential votes for him ● The candidate of the #Lebanese_Forces Ghiath Yazbek in Batroun district steals electricity, and we publish below the attached document. ● Electoral bribes in favor of the evangelical candidate on Makhzoumi's list ● Candidate #Mark_Dou is walking around the polling stations asking voters to give him their preferred vote and elect the lists of change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●  #Ziad_Aqel Al-Awni, the former and currently supported in Baabda from #Paula_Yacoubian, His Holiness was also among those accused of embezzling the money of 270 owners in the "Abraaj" project!!! ● I mean, as if we are missing anymore thieves in this country 😡 ● If the head of a building committee fell and embezzled its money, how if he became a deputy? ● In an audio recording that I own that is more than two and a half hours long, the voice of "Trusted MP Hussein Hajj Hassan is clearly heard begging me to stop attacking him on social media, offering me some temptations, leaving me the choice to attack whoever I want from the party!! ● · # is the one who Gebran_Basil brought aluminum to our Lebanon. He was the Minister of Energy and this is proven in the shipping documents... When he was the Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2018, he hid the explosives from the Lebanese in #Port_Beirut when he toured with the ambassadors of the countries of the world at the #Port_Beirut and near the airport and suburb of Beirut and that after Netanyahu's threat to #bomb these _ sites publicly if these materials are not removed???? ... #Gebran_Basil_Nasrallah are the reason for the explosion of the port of Beirut and these videos are drawn by the Lebanese people ● The candidate of the forces in Ashrafieh, George Shahwan, partner of Ibn Ali Doba, commander of the Syrian intelligence during the era of Hafez al-Assad and responsible for the bombing of Ashrafieh

Rumors aimed to intensify the tension and target responsible actors:

Pages promiting traditional political forces	Pages promoting the revolution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Confirmed information: \$200 for one vote!! The movement buys one vote for \$200 in Kesrouwan and Batroun, after a budget set by the party to consolidate its presence and compensate for the decline in its popularity. ● Arrest of 3 people from the #Kataeb party while they bribed a number of voters in witnessed crime. ● In #Bcharre district, moral pressure was exerted on the #voters and personal defamation was exerted on the poll chiefs by the so-called xxxxxx affiliated with the #Lebanese_Forces party. ● By names: Keys to electoral bribery in most districts Please post... Let him pay you and vote against him 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● #Hezbollah and the Free Patriotic Movement are using agents who were in Lebanese prisons to promote them in the south 🇅🇱 and death to Israel 😄 ● Hezbollah installs solar energy for its people ● · Mokhtar Hosh Halan xxxxx manipulates the people of the Riyaq region in the Bekaa and lies to them and that their names are not on the cross lists and they do exist. Please circulate and pay attention. ● The price of vote exceeded 600 dollars in one of the electoral distrctits .. and may reach 4 thousand dollars* ● Initial information indicates that the Progressive Party lost the Druze seat in Beirut II in favor of the forces of change 🇅🇱🇂

Rumors about the political, economic, social and security situation

Pages promoting the traditional political forces	Pages promoting the revolution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● *** What is going on in Baabda???... ● How true is the news reported by the Western media?? About the death of Michel Aoun and his son-in-law, Gebran Bassil, in mysterious circumstances over a month ago!!... ● What is happening in Lebanon under the guidance and supervision of the American intelligence and the Mossad? Israeli.. ● Iran sent nitrates from Georgia to Beirut, where Hezbollah stored them at the port 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● An official announcement of the bankruptcy of banks and the bankruptcy of the state issued by the Deputy Prime Minister of its Council of Ministers, in addition to inhibiting the distribution of flour, and cutting off water regionally to the Lebanese people... ● Some schools in Al-Qubba area and schools in Al-Tabbaneh area have now started sending messages of closure tomorrow due to the unstable security conditions in the Tripoli area

4. Manipulation and misinformation campaigns on social media platforms:

Content that was prepared or used in order to mislead and influence voters was spread on social media during electoral campaigns. This content has been published in various political contexts, including those directly related to specific candidates with the intent of harming reputation and defamation, such as candidate Jad Ghosn, candidate Karen Boustani, candidate Josephine Zughuib and candidate Paula Yacoubian. or it has been published to manipulate information by using visual/audio content or documents to support a specific narrative that is harmful to a particular actor, as well as publishing unverified information to make certain signals or suggestions about a particular person or actor through the use of memes, videos circulated or fabricated images.

A. Harming the reputation of political opponents and undermining their credibility through defamation videos by publishing a specific narrative and spreading rumors to influence public opinion.

On April 22, 2022, about 51 Twitter accounts participated in a smear campaign against the candidate, Jad Ghosn, using the hashtag #Dont_Be Like_Jad, initially accompanied by a [video](#) that harms his reputation and attributes improper things to him with the aim of striking and distorting his capacity and credibility.



A journalist [blogger](#) described the campaign against candidate Jad Ghosn as an intense, childish campaign programmed on Twitter against Ghosn. He considered that whoever launched the campaign feels the significance of the competition he represents, asking Ghosn to ignore them and continue his campaign.

On the other hand, candidate Karen Al-Bustani was subjected to a smear campaign by spreading rumors about her through a satirical political television program that published a [video](#) that later spread on social media pages, hinting indirectly that she was caught stealing from a supermarket, which prompted the candidate to hold a [press](#) conference to deny the matter and respond to the fabricators of the news against her. A "Trend" campaign was launched on Twitter in support of the candidate, Karen Al-Bustani, through the hashtag #We are all_Kaern_Al-Bustani and tweets attacking the publisher of the news.

This campaign, which aims to discredit the candidate, Al-Bustani, began indirectly by spreading rumors against her in a [post](#) that aimed to hint that she was violently abusing the domestic worker who works for her, which prompted the latter to commit suicide by throwing herself from the balcony of the house.

The candidate Josephine Zughaib was also subjected to an attempt to discredit her due to a video published on a small scale promoting unverified stories about the candidate's performance in managing an association affiliated to her and disbursing the money.

B. Manipulating information by using visual/audio content to support a specific narrative that is harmful to a political actor.

The association of Hezbollah with the Beirut Port Blast

With the electoral campaigns getting more intense, Al-Arabiya Al-Hadath channel broadcast a video accusing Iran and Hezbollah of transporting ammonium nitrate and storing it in the port of Beirut. It was republished on the channel's Twitter account on April 21 at 7:35 pm.

With the publication of this news, many Lebanese news websites and influential political figures circulated this story, and also promoted it on social media pages.



Hezbollah's fundamentalist culture that is being imposed on others by threat and force

On April 30, 2022, a video was published in which a seemingly religious man appeared speaking from a podium, behind which was the Hezbollah slogan for the electoral campaign, “We will protect and build,” and the logo of the Al-Khandaq news website, in which he stated: “Whoever wants to see his daughters on the beaches of Jounieh and Al-Muamelin and I do not know where, let him vote for them.” ...whoever wants to see his sons in brothels and doing drugs should also go to elect them.” This speech targeted the Lebanese Forces, “supported by Zionism and Wahhabism,” and added, “And whoever likes to replace faith with unbelief, then elect these impure people.”

The interaction with the content of the video was great, which was not adopted by any political party, especially Hezbollah. The [Al-Khandaq website](#) denied any connection to the video, adding that the image was fabricated with the site's logo and placed in the background of the video without their knowledge. Hezbollah was late in denying its relationship with Sheikh Jeshi and the words he stated in a [statement](#) issued on May 1 at night.

It turns out that the content of the religious figure's words is true and is part of religious sermons by Sheikh Nazir Al-Jishi on the [website of Al-Urwah Al-Wuthqa Channel](#), a Facebook page that promotes the sermons of the aforementioned Sheikh.

The content of the Sheikh's words provoked a large segment of Lebanese from all sects, who [denounced](#) his words on their personal accounts on social media. Not long after the video

spread, it began to be invested in politics by [politicians](#), [journalists](#), and [artists](#) opposed to Hezbollah. The [media](#) also published the news, attributing the video to a pro-Hezbollah sheikh.



But particularly, it was invested by anti-Hezbollah parties and parties against the current regime, specifically the Lebanese Forces Party.

Activists interacted on the social media with the aforementioned video, and some of the activists talked about the fact that the video background is complex, and some [media outlets](#) verified the content of the video and published details of the Sheikh's identity and his religious and partisan character.

Although it was revealed that the video was manipulated in terms of the background and the description of the aforementioned Sheikh who has no relationship with Hezbollah, pioneers continued to interact with the video that has a complex background on social media, denouncing the style of the Sheikh who is close to Hezbollah in addressing the Lebanese diversity and trying to impose a culture that does not resemble the Lebanese on all Lebanese territories. Activists also went further in their stances. [One](#) of them said, "There is no coexistence with such a terrorist ideology, O God, the partition. I don't want to go to any of the beaches in Tyre and Nabatiyeh." This discussion recalls the memory of the civil war and the proposals of division and federalism.

Political parties continued to invest in the aforementioned video to tighten tension and counter political propaganda. Supporters of the Lebanese Forces launched the Trend campaign on [Twitter](#), using the hashtag [#ثقافتهم_موت_ثقافتنا_حياه](#) that translates to [#their_culture_death_our_culture_life](#). The details of this campaign are below:

Scope	#	Campaign source	Target	Date
The supporters of the Lebanese forces launched the # hashtag as a response to the video by Nazir Jishi in which he insults Lebanese women in Christian areas, attacking the leader of Lebanese forces Samir Geagea, accusing The Lebanese forces of prostitution, drug trafficking and .Israeli agents	#ثقافتهم_موت_ثقا فتنا_حياه	Lebanese forces supporters	Hezbollah/Nazir Jishi	may 1 7:34pm

C- Creating fake pages to publish unverified information to establish specific indications or suggestions about a political actor through the use of memes, videos and fabricated images.


Several pages appeared on Facebook during the electoral campaign period, such as the [Rifag](#) page, which promotes the Lebanese Forces party, which changed its name at the beginning of 2022, [Red Platform](#), which promotes the Lebanese Forces party, and changed its name in August 2021, and the [Siyase101](#) page, which is affiliated to a website that promotes the Free Patriotic Movement and was created year 2021.

These pages are not fictional, rather they are managed by people or a group of people supporting the mentioned parties. However, during the electoral campaigns, we observed a flow of fake accounts run by unknown parties that aim to publish unverified information related to candidates in order to offend them and accuse them of bribery and vote buying.

An account has been created on Twitter under the name “Corruption By Names”, and it has published several memes about the names of electoral means belonging to specific candidates practicing electoral bribery and buying votes in specific areas.

This account was active between May 10 and 14 and published many of these memes. An account of a San Francisco-based company (96.8k Followers) referred to the aforementioned account @corruptedDealer, considering that a source of information on social media documented a widespread process of fraud in the elections in Lebanon.

This account used out-of-context information to say that right-wing parties had previously announced that they had received funding from countries such as Saudi Arabia.

<p>Replying to @XXX, @CorruptedDealer Perhaps, would like to see evidence. But there are those who have been getting their funding from Iran for decades not to mention from drug dealing and other nefarious activities</p>	<p>Tweet: 8:43pm · 11 May 2022 Lebanon: A social media source is @CorruptedDealer is documenting widespread #election #fraud in #lebanon. Extreme right parties @LFPartyOfficial & @LebaneseKataeb have publically admitted to receiving "fund raising" from countries .such as saudi arabia</p>	
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5. Hate speech and incitement to violence on Facebook

In addition to the complex and exaggerated campaigns on Twitter that promote hate speech against politicians such as #Geagea_Israeli_Project, #Samir_Geagea_Zionist, or in the face of opinionated female journalists in their stances against Hezbollah and the authority, such as the hashtag #Mother_Disabled, in reference to Dima Sadek's daughter, who has special needs, hate speech and speech encouraging violence have also spread during the elecotral campaigns on Facebook pages.

Hate speech during electoral campaigns

Hate speech: a direct attack against a person or group on the basis of inherited characteristics (race, color, religious affiliation, origins, gender, gender identity, disability...)

Among these characteristics, which are protected in accordance with international and META standards, are gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity. As well as exposure to others with expressions that include sexual acts.

Hate speech was monitored on Facebook against candidate Omar Harfoush including offensive words based on sex and gender identity. And exposing him to expressions that include sexual acts such "fun candidate."

Pictures and videos spread, including expressions, stereotypes, and accusations, most notably:

<p>-The history of the Sunni Candidate in Tripoli Omar Harfoush #Important_part 😂 #Amoura ❤️ -Sunni Candidate in Tripoli- Lebbanon... Omar bek Harfoush #Omar_Harfoush</p>	<p>-#fun_candidate in Tripoli Miss Omar Harfoush 🗳️ supported by the fun party 😄 -The thief goes and the f*ckable comes</p>
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In the same hate speech campaign context that targeted candidate Omar Harfouch, a letter was addressed to the minister of energy [Walid Fayyad](#) : “this #energy_minister is encouraging the gays too much, and whoever I with him is worse”, In addition to other publications of politicians that contradict the above-mentioned criteria and call him the [brother of the bitch](#).

Speech encouraging violence

During electoral campaigns, speech encouraging violence against members of the Lebanese army, the President of the Republic and candidate Gebran Bassil was detected on social media.

The [sinking of a boat carrying Lebanese immigrants](#) set out from the city of Tripoli in northern Lebanon led to a wave of anger against the politicians and members of the Lebanese army who tried to intercept the boat before it sank.

A [video](#) spread of a man in front of a hospital saying that we will break Michel Aoun’s cross, “Fuck you and your cross,” and another individual mentioned: “You must hold the military accountable and hang them in front of the Umah, Michel Aoun, you cursed old man, you kill or you get killed”, and the last misleading [video](#) was published about the Syrian war and commented on, "They are criminals dressed like the Lebanese army, as they killed dozens of children in a way more horrible than the crimes of ISIS." While someone shared a [photo](#) of one of the members of the Lebanese army with the caption of “the murderer of the children boat”, adding that “everyone meets in front of God”.

A speech encouraging violence by activists on social media emerged through the publication of [posts](#) urging an armed revolution in the event of the failure of the peaceful revolution at the polls, and videos threatening and [encouraging](#) violence against [candidates](#) and political activists.

Seventh: Advertising campaigns and their impact during the voting stage

The Lebanese Minister of Interior has set the dates for holding the elections from May 6 to May 15. The first stage includes the election of expatriates on May 6 and 8 and the election of employees on May 12, and the second stage includes general elections for all residents on Lebanese territory on May 15. According to a circular issued by the Elections Supervisory commission, the period extending from the fifth of May requires electoral silence in the media for candidates and electoral lists in accordance with the provisions of the election law.

This period was preceded, starting on April 28, by a wide campaign of solidarity on social media with the candidate Antoine Habashi of the Lebanese Forces party in the Baalbek-Hermel district on the list of building the state in the face of the list supported by Hezbollah, which has extensive influence in the region. Hezbollah officials, led by Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, stated that a project aimed at abolishing the resistance and tightening the nerve of the Shiite environment must be confronted in order to stand by the resistance and its allies.

The hashtag #We are all_Antoine_Habashi campaign was launched in solidarity with candidate Habashi after 3 Shiite candidates withdrew from his list as a result of pressure exerted by Hezbollah, who considered the position of candidate Antoine Habashi and his Lebanese Forces party hostile to the weapon of the resistance and demanded its removal. The candidate, Rifaat al-Masri, the third Shiite to withdraw from the State Building List, announced his withdrawal: "We are the children of a resistance family, a father from a grandfather, with a political legacy and a long history, which is proud of its weapons, the weapon directed against the Zionist and infidel enemies. As long as the Israeli enemy continues its aggression and arrogance against Lebanon, we are cohesive with the Lebanese resistance cohesive with the Lebanese resistance."

As for the fourth candidate, Hussein Raad, on this list, he did not submit to pressure, despite being [harassed](#), severely [beaten](#), and hospitalized after losing consciousness while attending the funeral of his mother in a Husseinieh in Baalbek. He was subjected to a campaign of [rumors](#) regarding his withdrawal from the battle, which he denied several times in the media.

The campaign of rumors about the withdrawal of candidate Raad did not spread extensively on social media, but rather from some accounts run by anonymous people who promote the resistance and Hezbollah.

The news about the candidate Raad's withdrawal was reported by an account named [of Hariri Lovers](#), on the evening of May 9th. Several other accounts republished the news reported from one source. It turns out that this account promotes positions in support of Hezbollah.

Ibrahim @Ibrahimoo101 May 10
Replying to @Hariri_lovers

واحد إيراني فارسي خميني من حزب إيران
خط صورة سعد الحريري، ما منصدقك انك
حريزي، انت عميل إيراني فارسي حزب
إيراني وتقطعة على السطر ، ما فيك
تضحك على العالم، مفضوح. نحن لنا حزب
إيران عدو بعد 7 ايار. لأ وشو بتعمل share
لحسابات من غنم حزب إيران. لتكون عرفان
حزب إيران عدو نحذره.



HaririLovers
@Hariri_lovers

Journalist Joined January 2022
26 Following 91 Followers

معك... و اليوم أكثر

<p>عباس شكر @mj408kaboc6</p> <p>انسحابات في بعليك- الهرمل لصالح من؟ اعلن المرشح عن المقعد الشيعي في دائرة بعليك الهرمل على لائحة القوات اللبنانية "حسين علي رعد" انسحابه من المعركة الانتخابية لصالح لائحة "حزب الله" اعتراضا على تصريحات النائب الطائفية كما قال.</p> <p>Translate Tweet 3:19pm · 10 May 2022 · Twitter for Android 1 Retweet 13 Likes</p>	<p>السيد ابو عباس @mhm09442740011</p> <p>اعلن المرشح عن المقعد الشيعي في دائرة بعليك الهرمل على لائحة القوات اللبنانية حسين علي رعد انسحابه من الانتخابات لصالح لائحة حزب الله اعتراضا على تصريحات النائب انطوان حبشي الطائفية كما قال . ويذكر ان رعد صهر الشيخ عباس الجوهري وهو راجع مرشح شيعي ينسحب من اللائحة في بعليك.</p> <p>Translate Tweet 3:36pm · 10 May 2022 · Twitter for Android 1 Like</p>	<p>Replying to @...</p> <p>انسحابات في بعليك- الهرمل لصالح من؟ اعلن المرشح عن المقعد الشيعي في دائرة بعليك الهرمل على لائحة القوات اللبنانية "حسين علي رعد" انسحابه من المعركة الانتخابية لصالح لائحة "حزب الله" اعتراضا على تصريحات النائب الطائفية كما قال.</p> <p>Translate Tweet 12:34pm · 10 May 2022 · Twitter for iPhone</p>	<p>عالمكشوف @3almakchouf May 9 احتمال كبير قوي نسمع انسحاب مرشح جديد من لائحة القوات .. عالمكشوف#</p> <p>محمد علي @Mokawama_22</p> <p>Replying to @3almakchouf المرشح حسين علي رعد انسحب بشكل رسمي</p> <p>Translate Tweet 11:58pm · 9 May 2022 · Twitter for Android 1 Reply 1 Like</p>	<p>HaririLovers @HaririLovers</p> <p>ضربة جديدة لحزب القوات اللبنانية# اعلن المرشح عن المقعد الشيعي في دائرة بعليك الهرمل حسين علي رعد انسحابه من المعركة الانتخابية لصالح لائحة حزب الله اعتراضا على تصريحات النائب انطوان حبشي الطائفية. ويذكر ان رعد صهر الشيخ عباس الجوهري وهو راجع مرشح شيعي ينسحب من اللائحة</p> <p>Translate Tweet 1:14pm · 9 May 2022 · Twitter for iPhone 2 Replies 3 Likes</p>
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And many repercussions of this rumors were monitored among comments on different accounts supporting Hezbollah on Twitter, as such:

<p>Replying to @...</p> <p>ما بتفرق انسحب او ما انسحب بيت رعد معروفة أصواتهم لمن ما يعرف له يحيوا يتهدلوا يلي بينلوا على لوائح غير الحزب</p> <p>خارج السيطرة @kum... May 10 Replying to @... اصلا بيت رعد وكل عيل البقاع الشرفا تيرؤا من كل هالفطريات انتال عباس الجوهري وحسين رعد وغيرو</p>	<p>#خارج_السيطرة خبر انسحاب حسين رعد المرشح على لائحة القوات في بعليك غير دقيق</p> <p>Translate Tweet 12:47am · 10 May 2022 · Twitter for iPhone 1 Reply 3 Likes</p>
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By monitoring the campaigns that were stirred on Twitter during the period starting on the fifth of May, a number of campaigns can be detected in which political actors tried to influence

public opinion in order to urge voters to vote in certain directions. The most important of these campaigns were as follows:

#مقاطعه_لعيونك	May-9	#فشروا	May-5
#انفجار_مرفا_بيروت	May-10	#صار_الوقت_للمشرع_الحر	May-5
#بعلبك_حره_البخاري_برا	May-10	#بولا_يعقوبيان	May-5
#من_الاغتراب_الي_معراب	May-11	#صوت_تيار_صوت_لجهنم	May-5
#انتخابات_المغتربين	May-12	#ما_تكون_مثل_جاد	May-6
#الصمت_الانتخابي	May-15	#مقاطعه_لكرامتي	May-6
#قصه_لايحه_بولا_يعقوبيان	May-15	#انطوان_حبشي	May-8
#قادرين	May-15	#انتخابات_لبنان_2022	May-8
#مقاطعتك_بتخدمن	May-15	#لبنان_ينتخب	May-8
#انت_خيارِي_حزب_الله	May-15	#طريق_الجديده	May-8
#صوتي_تيار_وطني_حر	May-15	#قادرين	May-8
#من_الاغتراب_الي_معراب	May-15	#خلي_صوتك_حكاية_نصر	May-8
#معك_للموت	May-15	#باقون_نحمي_ونبني	May-8
#صوتي_وفا_للدن	May-15	#صوتي_تيار_وطني_حر	May-9

Among the advertising and influence campaigns during the period of silence was the call to boycott the elections in compliance with the decision launched by the head of the Future Movement, Saad Hariri. Activists used the hashtag #مقاطعه_لعيونك, which can be translated to #boycott_at_your_service to motivate the boycott, which took a political character against the Lebanese Forces Party, after the leader Samir Geagea sought to attract the Sunni vote that preferred the Future Movement in the elections. A subsequent campaign entitled "Your Boycott serves them" was launched to urge the Sunni voter to participate in the elections. Hezbollah supporters launched the hashtag #Baalbek_Free_Al-Bukhari_out in response to a tweet by the Saudi ambassador and his attempt to encourage participation in the elections for the anti-Hezbollah forces, including in the Baalbek-Hermel region. On the day of the election, he launched the hashtag #boycott_for_my_dignity and the hashtag #the_road_of_seriousness, which spread after activists from the region placed a swimming pool in the middle of the road, indicating that the electoral process does not concern them.

The results of the elections showed a decline in the percentage of voters in the Future Movement areas such as Tripoli, 28% of the voters elected, compared to 39% in the 2018 elections.

The hashtag #Beirut_Port_Blast started trending and was circulated on the Twitter on Thursday, May 5, the day before the elections of the expatriates on May 6 and 8 in two batches. By monitoring the circulation of this hashtag, it was found that the circulation of this hashtag is continuous, hence it is being reused on a larger scale on each occasion that reminds us of the crime that was described as the crime of the era. Since the first of May, users on Twitter have re-used it before the elections of the diaspora to [remind](#) them the horror of the crime and its effects and the impunity from prosecution and punishment of those accused of it, and urging voters to hold [accountable](#) those who blew up the port, as they claim.

Hashtags such as #capable, #expatriate_elections, and #from_expatriate_to_merab were used to motivate expatriate voters to vote and take advantage of their votes, with the wave of anger and resentment against the political parties that have taken over television and electronic media to motivate expatriates through coverage, especially during the period of silence and polling.

While the supporters of the parties in power, such as the Free Patriotic Movement and Hezbollah, tried to broadcast advertising campaigns to escalate the partisan tension and confront the campaigns they are exposed to, such as #your_voice_Free_Patriotic_Movement and #keep_your_voice_a_glory.

Eighth: Gender dimensions in electoral campaigns

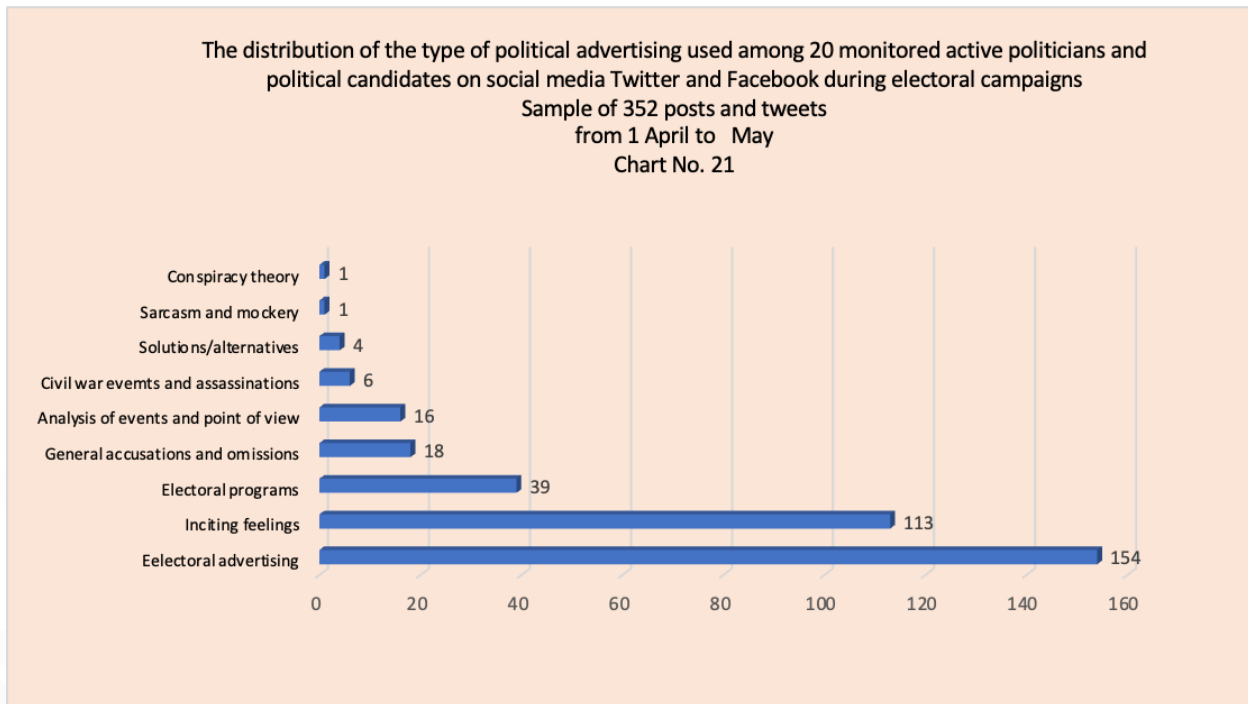
The final number of women candidates for the parliamentary elections was 118 out of a total of 718 candidates, or 16.43%. As the number of registered lists reached 103, women candidates were able to enter only 64 of them. This means that about 38% of the competing lists did not include women in them. The failure of the proposal to reform the electoral law in terms of adopting a women's quota for the 2022 elections made women's access to the parliamentary symposium decline due to inherited social and political factors that limit the political role of women.

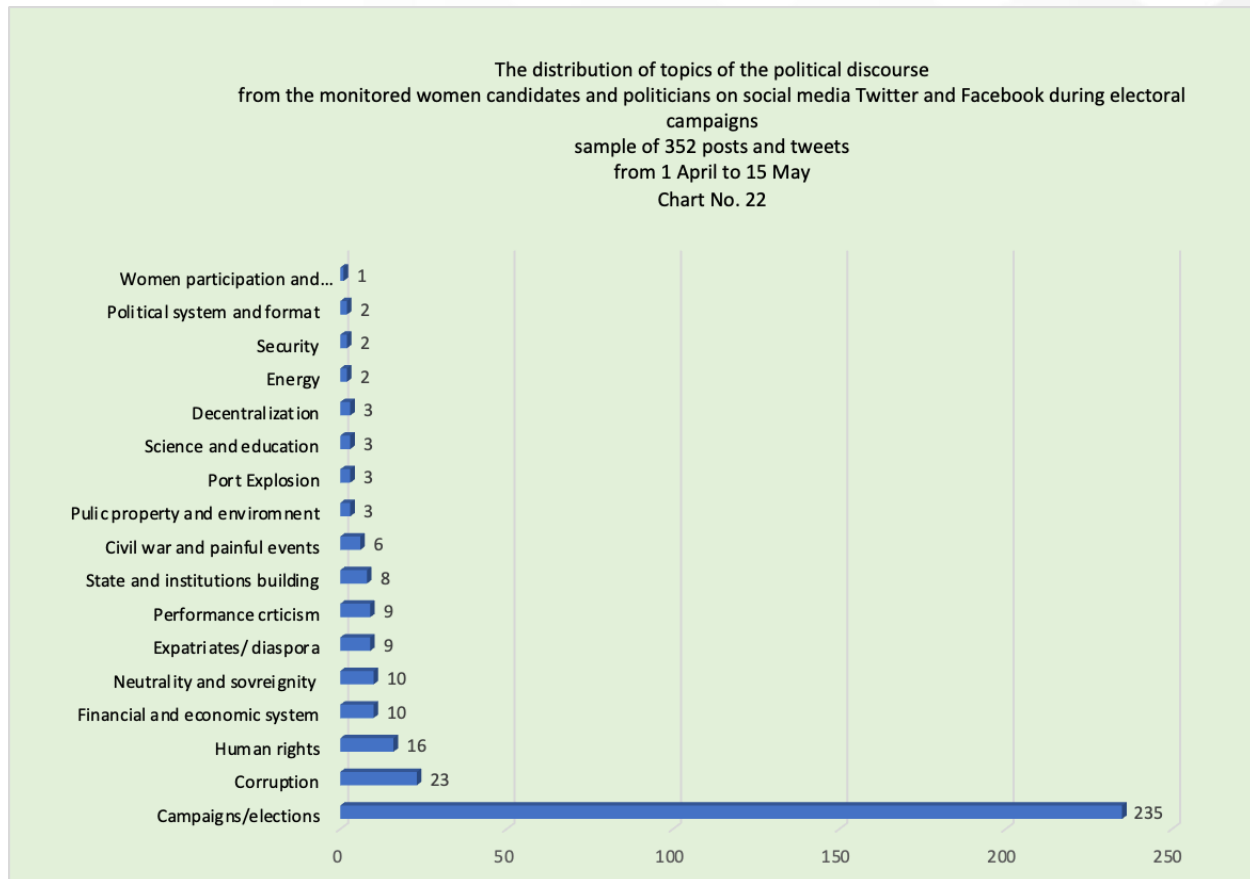
This reality was reflected in the media appearance of female candidates especially on television. In a study by Maharat Foundation on television coverage of electoral campaigns from February 1 to May 15, 2022, the appearance of women in news bulletins reached 5%, compared to 95% for men. The percentage of active women participating in the political field in talk shows increased, reaching 18%, compared to 82% for men.

- Women's political presence in electoral campaigns

During the electoral campaigns, several women candidates emerged thanks to their electoral campaigns, raising the slogan of confrontation without partisan support. Social media has made it possible to partially fill the gap in the access to television coverage. It was found that the majority of women candidates used campaign accounts or their personal accounts for electoral promotion and communication with followers. We can note that 5 female candidates did not have any account on social media and that about 12 did not use their accounts effectively. While about 100 female candidates were active on social media to promote, publicize and launch positions. The sample monitored above for monitoring and analyzing the political discourse of political actors included about 20% of women.

The two charts below show that the discourse of arousing feelings constituted 32% of the discourse of political actors, but the electoral announcement and promotion of the electoral program accounted for about 55% of the total discourse, in addition to the fact that about 67% of the topics of political discourse focus on electoral campaigns, and this indicates the need for women candidates for advertising and self-promotion.





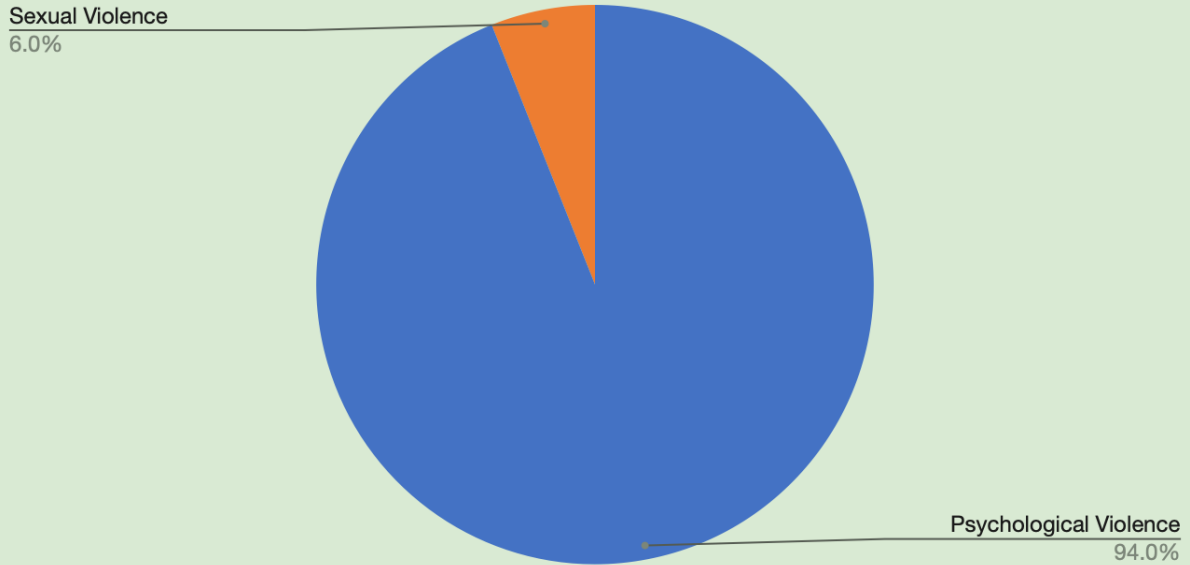
- Forms of online violence against women in politics

Some of the women candidates were subjected to online violence on their accounts on social media, and by monitoring the accounts of 100 active women candidates on social media, it was found that about 43% of them were exposed to some form of online violence against women.

In a study conducted by Maharat on violence against women in politics, forms of violence were detected and were distributed as follows:

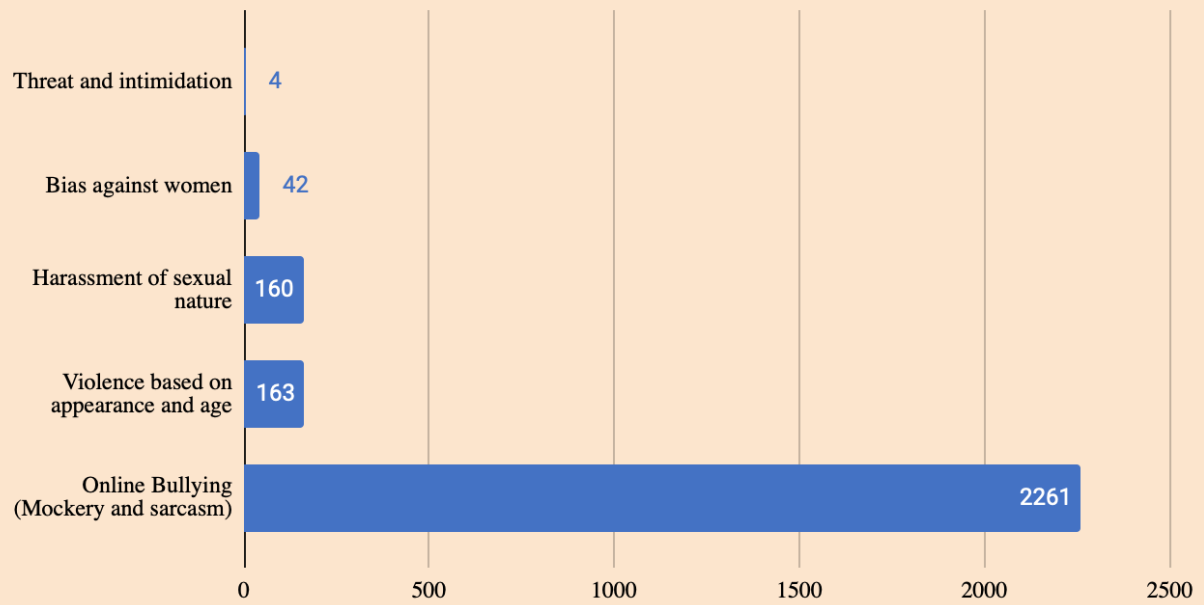
- 6% sexual violence (sending statements or content of a sexual nature to the candidate)
- 94% psychological violence (bullying, abuse, prejudice, threats and intimidation based on sex, gender or social stereotyping)

The distribution of the form of online violence against women in politics sample of 2630 monitored violent comment on the accounts of 43 candidates on Twitter and Facebook from 1 February to 15 May
Chart No. 23



The analysis of the forms of violence directed at women candidates through comments on their accounts and their activity on social media, shows that about 86% of the responses and violent comments are considered online bullying (abuse, mockery), and about 6% of them came in the form of violence based on appearance and age, in addition to a similar percentage of harassment of a sexual nature. Also, 1.6% of violent comments were recorded in the category of bias against women, including gender stereotypes, the role of women in society, and the patterns that are to be followed and imposed on them by the society and the environment in which they live.

The Distribution of the forms of online violence against women in Politics sample of 2630 monitored violent comments on the accounts of 43 women candidates on Twitter and Facebook From February 1 till May 15
Chart No. 24



Below is a sample of prejudice against women in the comments section of their social media accounts.

<p>Someone commented on the video of the candidate Bouchra El :Khalil saying According to Shariaa,“ as long as you are not veiled, no one is allowed to give you his voice, I advise you “.to veil</p>			<p>Someone commented on a video of the candidate Halima :Kaakour, saying "Go take care of you" house and husband and children and check what are you going to "cook for them hahaha</p>
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Ninth: Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

- It is clear that the political discourse of the candidates was not based on electoral programs since Political discourse related to electoral programs and proposing solutions and alternatives reached only 5.7% of the total monitored discourse of the monitored political actors on social media.
- The political discourse of political actors was reflected in campaigns that increase disinformation and the intensity of the struggle over Social media, as the monitoring of influencers and active pages showed that most of them used provocative speech, inciting emotions and political propaganda associated with promoting the leader or offending political opponents. Moreover, some campaigns started with a hashtag launched by the leader. In addition, groups and pages contributed in the promotion and the spread of rumors.
- The involvement of party supporters in campaigns of misinformation, manipulation of information, and harassment that reached the extent of hatred in some cases confirms the absence of an organizational framework that stimulates transparency and integrity in the partisan work of political parties.
- The high rate of negativity among the political discourse reflects the crisis of the system and institutions that Lebanon is going through and the need for international, regional and local initiatives to reduce the intensity of the conflict.
- The presentation of gender bias, social violence, and gender inequality in Lebanese society and the absence of available protective frameworks leads to online violence against women on social media platforms.
- The percentage of voter education materials that were supposed to be produced and published by the supervisory commission for elections on the elections and the media, especially television, was very low. This is reflected in the citizen's understanding of the elections, the electoral process elections and the formation of an environment enabling the circulation of rumors and misinformation.
- The media did not play an active role in fact checking information and rumors circulating about the events related to the elections which came in light of a lack of public communication from the bodies entrusted with the administration of the elections, in addition to the lack of citizens' trust in public institutions which contributed in the creation of an enduring environment for speeches based only on arousing feelings and not data and factual evidence on social media.

- It is necessary to strengthen civil society initiatives on digital media education to develop critical thinking in consumption of information by users of social media platforms.

-Collaboration between civil society and social media platforms is necessary in order to find preventive solutions to reduce incitement, hatred and misinformation on these platforms, especially during election times, it is also necessary to work on enhancing the use of the complaints mechanisms available on these platforms.

Recommendations

Recommendations for political parties and decision makers:

- Establishing an independent elections management body whose tasks include voter education and dissemination of awareness programs to combat misinformation and hate speech, and replace the supervisory commission for elections, whose role is limited to monitoring and inform the judicial authorities of any violations related to misinformation and hate speech without any direct powers.

- Amending the election law to include candidates' speech on social media, in line with the landscape of electoral campaigns that has changed and moved to the digital world, without compromising freedom of expression, whereof we can benefit from best practices in other democracies and should take into account rapid change in the digital world and on platforms.

- Activating public communication for the administration of the election, provided that it listens and responds to citizens' concerns and works transparently (Two-way communication)

- Urging the political parties to adopt a code of conduct that encourages partisans not to use hate speech and misinformation on social media.

- Incorporating digital media education into educational curriculums to enhance the critical thinking of social media platforms users so that they do not contribute to a harmful information environment.

Recommendations for social media platforms company:

-Networking with civil society

- Benefiting from the monitoring results carried out by institutions and researchers, especially those that lead to strengthening preventive measures on social media platforms such as the exchange of keyword lists or understanding the local context, and other resources that positively affect the policies of these platforms.

- Strengthening partnerships with civil society to disseminate the policies of these platforms and encourage complaints mechanisms.

Recommendations for civil society:

- Increasing initiatives, countering, documenting and analyzing discourses on social media platforms in order to fuel debate based on evidence and data to find solutions to combat harmful information and hate speech on social media.

- Increasing fact checking initiatives and supporting independent media platforms in order to enhance accountability.

- Strengthening safe spaces for women activists in the political field to document and share their experiences, especially when it comes to the issue of violence in politics on the Internet and encouraging them to use available mechanisms, including complaints mechanisms on the same platforms.

- Strengthening digital media education initiatives and developing the capacities of young men and women to create alternative content built on evidence, not on inciting feelings, intimidation and hatred.

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2022

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