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Hezbollah, Allies Win Decisive Victory in East Lebanon Vote

By Jason Ditz
May 9, 2016



Eastern Lebanon has held its first elections in nearly six years over the weekend, and early results are showing a dominant performance for the coalition of parties which includes Hezbollah, with the parties particularly strong in the area around Baalbek.

The elections were only held in Beirut and Bekaa Valley, with other parts of the country expected to vote at a later date. Hezbollah reported its coalition fielded candidates in 80 of the 143 municipalities in the Bekaa Valley, and believes it has won a complete victory, taking every single seat it contested.

Hezbollah's bloc did not run in municipalities around Zahleh, the Bekaa provincial capital, where Christian parties had a coalition that swept the results. Turnout in Baalbek, a traditional Hezbollah stronghold, was the highest in the region, while Beirut was said to have relatively low turnout.

Hezbollah's political wing has been part of the coalition government in Lebanon since 2005, and its side is likely to continue to hold onto power when all the regional elections are done. Lebanon has been in a state of political confusion in recent years, with no side able to agree on a president.

In Lebanese politics, power is split along secular lines as a matter of law. Presidents are Maronite Christians, while prime ministers are Sunnis, and parliament speakers are always Shi'ites. This means coalitions aiming to form a government always include some of every religion. Narrow majorities in recent years, however, have made settling on some of these positions difficult.