

FOR IMMEDIATE WORLDWIDE RELEASE

## Lebanese Expatriates Unite From 139 Countries to Demand their Voting Rights

*May 11th 2005: International Day of Solidarity with Beirut Peaceful Demonstrations*

**Paris, New York, London, Toronto, Berlin, Boston, Sao Paolo- May 11th 2005.** Thousands of Lebanese expatriates in 139 countries are being urged to communicate with the Lebanese Embassies, Consulates and Foreign Missions to demand their rights to vote from abroad, on May 11<sup>th</sup> 2005.

The International Committee for the [www.lebanese-abroad.com](http://www.lebanese-abroad.com) petition is calling May 11th a day of global solidarity with the Lebanese Citizens who will peacefully demonstrate in front of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Beirut at 13:00 local time, demanding the voting rights of the Lebanese abroad in the upcoming parliamentary elections in Lebanon.

More than 14,000 Lebanese have signed the online petition launched two months ago from Paris. This petition takes ground within the Lebanese Constitution and the Lebanese Electoral Law. The Electoral Law grants full voting rights to all law-abiding Lebanese citizens over the age of 21 whose names appear on electoral lists. Therefore, from a legal perspective, the Electoral Law does not disqualify the Lebanese abroad from participating in the elections.

The current Electoral Law only fails in outlining a mechanism for them to exercise their voting rights directly from abroad. In light of the momentum gathered, and to remedy this minor shortcoming, the petition organizers have carried their plight to Lebanon where a Bill amendment has been recently proposed by a local prominent lawyer, Chibli Mallat. It outlines a simple co-ordination process between Lebanese embassies worldwide and holders of official electoral lists in Lebanon. In essence, this process mirrors the practices of many other democratic countries that allow their citizens living abroad to vote.

The [www.lebanese-abroad.com](http://www.lebanese-abroad.com) International Committee is committed to the long term realization of their objective. It is calling on the international community to help support the Lebanese democratic cause by raising the awareness level on this issue, until all eligible Lebanese citizens are allowed to fully exercise their voting rights, free of discrimination.

### **About the [www.Lebanese-Abroad.com](http://www.Lebanese-Abroad.com) International Committee**

Founded solely on the principle of citizenship, the [www.lebanese-abroad.com](http://www.lebanese-abroad.com) initiative is a neutral and independent association of concerned Lebanese citizens who have pledged to remain above and beyond any confessional, cultural, political or ideological differences. The main objective of this association is to obtain an amendment of the Lebanese Electoral Law in order to allow Lebanese citizens living abroad to participate in their country's political life. Among its achievements are the gathering of 14,000 signatures endorsing its petition from 139 countries, and international and local lobby activities aimed at granting all eligible Lebanese citizens their voting rights from abroad.

All Press Contacts: [contact@lebanese-abroad.com](mailto:contact@lebanese-abroad.com) ##

**Text of Petition sent to Lebanese Embassies on May 11th 2005, and signed by 14,000 Lebanese citizens from 139 countries**

MAY 11 2005

BY FAX or EMAIL

OPEN LETTER TO LEBANESE EMBASSIES, CONSULATES & FOREIGN MISSIONS:

WE DEMAND THE RIGHT TO VOTE AS CITIZENS OF LEBANON

The Lebanese living abroad hereby request their legitimate right to VOTE, much as citizens of all democratic states are allowed to vote even when they reside outside their countries' borders.

Lebanese expatriates from all communities have always brought a steadfast support in all matters to their motherland.

They have been relentless in safeguarding, from abroad, a bond of national solidarity and unity without which Lebanon would not be what it is today.

The Lebanese of the Diaspora send an urgent call to put an end to the governing authorities' disregard and indifference towards them.

They demand to be involved in major decisions concerning Lebanon, especially those affecting the sovereignty, the unity and the very existence of their country.

They call for establishing, in Lebanese embassies and consulates across the globe, a structure allowing them to exert fully their legitimate voting rights.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Signature

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Eligible Lebanese citizen