

WHAT TO SAY WHEN THEY SAY:

**Tips for encouraging your friends who have given up to become
active citizens**



sawti
صوتني

WHAT TO SAY WHEN THEY SAY:

Why should I join a political party?

If we want fundamental change in Lebanon, the best channel is through emerging political parties who are working on putting together political programs and rallying the Lebanese population behind them. We need political parties that represent us and address our concerns - the best way to ensure that is to join them and work from within!

WHAT TO SAY WHEN THEY SAY:

How can I trust political parties ?

You shouldn't blindly trust a political party but if a political party's values, vision and political program makes sense to you, then engage with that party, provide feedback, and hold the members of that party accountable.

How do I know who to choose? Which party do my values align with?

Join the political party whose vision for Lebanon you share, values align with yours and political programs seem like the best way forward for Lebanon. Attend events featuring members of these political parties, ask your questions and join the party whose answers are most convincing to you.

WHAT TO SAY WHEN THEY SAY:

Why don't all the opposition parties agree?

The parties in the opposition all agree that they want to change the status quo and are in constant communication with each other towards that goal – several of them have formed coalitions with one another. They may disagree on the approach they should take to change the status quo or the policy directions they believe are necessary for Lebanon. As long as their disagreements are issues-based and not identity-based and as long as they continue a healthy conversation about these issues, it's okay that they disagree!

WHAT TO SAY WHEN THEY SAY:

Will I make a difference?

Yes! Not only will you make a difference during elections where every vote counts (check out the interactive map on sawtivoice.org to see how much your vote counts), but more importantly, by being politically engaged at all stages of the political process – so that you have the knowledge and avenues through which you can challenge political parties on their policy programs, debate issues that affect the daily lives of citizens and hold politicians accountable.

WHAT TO SAY WHEN THEY SAY:

I don't like to be affiliated with political parties. I value my independent judgement.

Being part of a political party shouldn't mean that you give up your independent judgment! Your critical thinking and independent perspective can go a long way in making sure the party's policies are always challenged and revised and that it continues to represent the people. Joining a political party also doesn't mean you have to agree with every policy or decision, but you can really play a role in voicing your disagreements and concerns constructively.

We have a negative view of political parties in Lebanon because the traditional policies have been based more on identity rather than on issues and policies – to have a healthy democracy, we need to change that notion together.

WHAT TO SAY WHEN THEY SAY:

I don't know anything about their views, how can I make sure they are the right party to join?

This is exactly the problem Sawti was created to solve. The website features these alternative political parties and details their history, mission, leadership and links users to resources to learn more about them. Sawti has also asked each of the political parties a series of questions to better understand where they stand on various issues and how they would approach them - all these responses will be available on the website soon! Finally, there are many events, panel discussions and debates you can join to learn more and ask questions. Of course, you can also visit their social media pages to learn more and join them once you feel you've found a party that most represents you!

Remember that if you join a party and end up changing your mind, you can always leave it and join another one!

WHAT TO SAY WHEN THEY SAY:

How do I know this isn't all just talk? If they get to power how do I know they won't just be like the traditional Lebanese parties?

There is never a guarantee. The main safeguard you have is to engage with these parties early on and continue to be an active and involved citizen so that if the representatives you vote for abuse their power, engage in corruption, fail to work on the policies they promised to work on, you can hold them accountable while they are in government. And once their term ends, don't vote for them again! Once we change the system and eliminate the use of identity politics that allow politicians to benefit from and maintain a clientelist system – the norm will become to hold politicians accountable using both your voice and your vote.

WHAT TO SAY WHEN THEY SAY:

I agree with most of their views but disagree with some, is it still worth joining?

Absolutely! Joining a political party doesn't mean you agree with every position it holds, but when you join, you can bring your disagreement to light and advocate for the changes you think are necessary. A political party is effectively a group of people who agree on a direction and who work together on tailoring policies so that if and when they make it into government, they can legislate and implement these policies – and this is a dynamic process that is always subject to changes and new perspectives.

WHAT TO SAY WHEN THEY SAY:

When someone actually does something for Lebanon, then my family and I will vote for them.

The only way for a political party to do something for Lebanon is through being in Parliament and in Government. At this stage, we can only know what they plan to do and if their plans make sense to us, we should join them, support them and vote for them. Once they're in power we can really put them to test and find out if they are willing and able to do something for Lebanon or not.

WHAT TO SAY WHEN THEY SAY:

Won't I be targeted by my local za'im's (leader's) party if I join an alternative party?

The traditional political parties have used many tactics to manipulate us into either supporting them, choosing to stay silent, or distancing ourselves from politics. One of those tactics has been fearmongering. The best way to remove the power from the hands of the leaders of the traditional political parties is to strengthen the alternative political parties by rallying behind them and joining them. If you fear an imminent threat to your livelihood or your family because of your local traditional party leader, you can always support alternative parties behind the scenes or anonymously.