

## SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

Dates of Elections: August 1 and 2, 1977

### Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the members of Parliament on the normal expiry of their term of office.

### Characteristics of Parliament

The unicameral Parliament of Syria, the People's Council, consists of 195 deputies (up from 186 since the 1973 elections) elected for 4 years. According to the 1973 Constitution, half the Assembly members must be workers and peasants; these currently number 99.

### Electoral System

All Syrian citizens who are at least 18 years of age and registered as electors are entitled to vote if they meet the conditions specified in the election law.

As mentioned above, at least half of the deputies must be workers and peasants, terms specifically defined in the election law. All parliamentarians are chosen by general, secret, direct and equal ballot. Each member is deemed to represent the whole population, and his mandate may not be restricted by any restrictions or conditions.

State workers, including public sector workers, may nominate themselves for membership in the People's Council. Except in the cases defined by law, the elected member may take leave in order to join the Council. His post or work is reserved for him, the period of leave being regarded as active service. Candidates may run either in an individual capacity or as member of a party list.

If a parliamentary seat becomes vacant for any reason, it is filled through a by-election within 90 days, provided the remaining period of the Council's term is not less than six months.

### General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

Some 2,250 candidates participated in the election campaign, which focused to a great extent on domestic day-to-day problems — inflation, high rents, salaries. There were a considerable number of independent candidates

since certain lists of the National Front were "open", that is, containing fewer names of candidates than seats to be filled. These independent candidates were generally regarded as conservative.

Party lists were presented by ruling Arab Socialist Renaissance (*Baath*) Party and those of four other leftist groups that together formed the National Progressive Front governing coalition of President Hafez al-Assad, in power since 1971.

Late in the campaign, it was reported that about two-thirds of all candidates had withdrawn. On polling day, 31 Front nominees were returned unopposed. Since the required minimum of 51 % of the electorate had not cast ballots on August 1, voting was extended an additional day.

The voting results, as announced, showed that the *Baath* — which supports militant Arab unity — once again emerged as the single largest party and that the Front altogether won all but 36 seats, these being captured by Independents. The new Parliament held its first session on August 18.

## Statistics

### 1. *Distribution of Seats in the People's Council*

~ .... , ,, Political Group	Number of seats
National Progressive Front	
— <i>Baath</i> Party. . . . .	125
— Unionist Socialist . . . . .	12
— Arab Socialist Union. . . . .	8
— Arab Socialist Party. . . . .	8
— Communist Party. . . . .	6
Independents. . . . .	36
	195