

Reserved seats for minorities

This document outlines how minority representation through reserved seats is addressed in different countries. The countries that have reserved seats in the legislature for 'identifiable ethnic or religious minorities' include: Colombia ('black communities'), Croatia (the Hungarian, Italian, Czech, Slovak, Ruthenian, Ukrainian, German, and Austrian minorities), India (the scheduled tribes and castes), Jordan (Christians and Circassians), Niger (Tuareg), New Zealand (Māori), Pakistan (non-Muslim minorities), Palestine (Christians and Samaritans), Samoa (non-indigenous minorities), Slovenia (Hungarians and Italians), and Taiwan (the 'aboriginal' community). Lebanon and Fiji also have reserved seats for communal groups.

Also for the Kurdistan National Assembly elections of 30 January 2005, there were seats reserved for the Turkoman, Chaldean, Assyrian, Armenians and Arabs so that they could get a seat through remainders if they did not gain any seat in the first allocation of seats.

The following is a summary of the provisions for some of those countries.

Jordan

The House of Deputies has a total of 104 members elected by Single Non-Transferable Vote from a mixture of single-member and multi-member electoral districts. Ninety-two of those seats are reserved for Muslim candidates (including 9 seats for Bedouin candidates in 3 electoral districts), 9 seats are reserved for Christian candidates, and 3 seats are reserved for Chechen and Circassian candidates. A further 6 seats are reserved for the unsuccessful women candidates with the highest percentages of the votes in their electoral districts. Bedouin voters and candidates are registered separately, and can only vote or run as candidates for the Bedouin seats. The other seats for Muslims, Christians and Circassian and Chechen candidates are divided among 42 electoral districts. Only candidates from the specific communities can run for the seats allocated for that community in the different electoral districts. However, apart from the Bedouin seats, all voters can choose to vote for any candidate in their electoral district, irrespective of which religious group the candidate belongs to.

Lebanon

The Chamber of Deputies has 128 members, elected using a Block Vote system in multi-member electoral districts. Under the Constitution, all seats are reserved with half the members are for Muslims and half for Christians. The Election Law further divides the seats between eleven officially recognised religious confessions according to an approximate proportion of each group in the population (i.e. of the 64 Muslim seats, 27 are reserved for Sunni, 27 for Shi'ite, 8 for Druze and 2 for Alawites. Of the 64 Christian seats, 34 are for Maronite, 14 for Greek Orthodox, 8 for Greek Catholic, 5 for Armenian Orthodox, and one each for Armenian Catholic, Evangelical Protestant and other Christian Minorities).

India

The Lok Sabha (lower house) has 543 members, all of whom are elected by First Past the Post from single-member districts. Seventy-nine of those districts are reserved for candidates from scheduled castes and 41 districts are reserved for candidates from scheduled tribes. The number of reserved districts in each state approximates the proportions of the population of the scheduled castes and tribes. All voters registered in a reserved seat vote for the candidates from the scheduled caste or tribe.

New Zealand

Four reserved parliamentary seats for New Zealand's indigenous Māori population were established in 1867, elected by First Past the Post. These single-member constituency seats were retained following the change to MMP in 1993, although their number now varies according to the proportion of Māori who choose to register as voters on the Māori electoral roll. Currently there are 7 Māori electoral districts and 63 general electoral districts.

Fiji

Fiji's Parliament has a total membership of 71 elected from single-member districts using the Alternative Vote. Indigenous Fijian voters elect 23 members, Indian voters elect 19 members,

Rotuman voters elect 1 member and other voters elect 3 members. The other 25 members are elected by voters from all communities using an 'open' roll. Following the military coup in December 2006, the interim Prime Minister has stated that the communal seats will be abolished.