

## US: Lebanon vote delay 'unacceptable'

Contributed by Whitehouse, AFP  
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WASHINGTON (AFP) — The White House on Monday condemned delays in Lebanon's presidential vote as "unacceptable" and urged outside forces to stop meddling in the deadlocked political process there.

"We would highly encourage those who are interfering from outside of Lebanon to cease and desist and allow the Lebanese to move forward and elect a president," spokeswoman Dana Perino said. "We are very concerned."

Such criticisms generally target Syria, which dominated its smaller neighbor militarily for 29 years before withdrawing, under international pressure, in 2005.

Perino, speaking after Lebanon's speaker's office said that a parliamentary session to elect the country's president had been postponed from Tuesday to March 25, warned: "That continued delay is unacceptable."

The decision marks the 16th time since September that a parliament session to elect a successor to pro-Syrian head of state Emile Lahoud has failed amid a standoff between the Western-backed government and the Hezbollah-led opposition, backed by Syria and Iran.

Lebanon has been without a president since November, when Lahoud's term ended. The political crisis is the worst since the end of the country's 1975-1990 civil war.