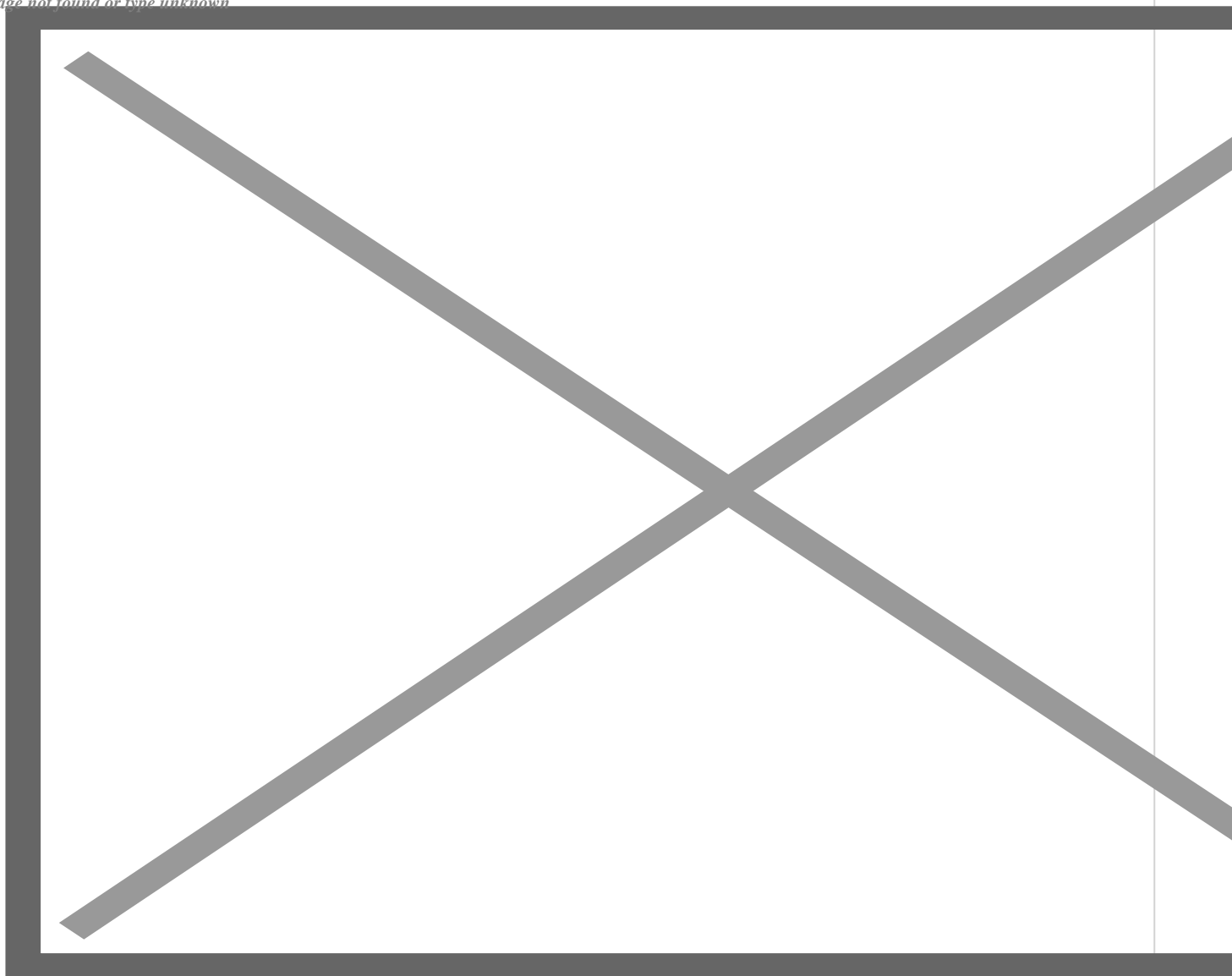


Palestinian election board approves candidate lists for May vote

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The legislative polls will be first Palestinian elections in more than a decade. (Photo: Ali Ali/EPA)

Ramallah, April 5 (RHC)-- Palestinian election officials have announced that 36 candidate lists have been approved to run in legislative elections set for next month -- the first Palestinian polls in 15 years.

The vote, which precedes a presidential election called for July 31st, is part of an effort by the dominant Palestinian movements -- Fatah and Hamas -- to boost international support for Palestinian governance.

Groups had until Wednesday to submit their lists of candidates to contest the May 22 legislative polls. Individual names on each list are due to be published on Tuesday, but the Palestinian electoral commission announced on its website on Sunday that it had approved all 36 applications.

President Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah movement, which dominates the Palestinian Authority in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, is participating in the elections, as is Hamas, which has run the Israeli-blockaded Gaza Strip since 2007.

While Fatah and Hamas have reached an agreement for voting to take place in the West Bank and Gaza, the ability of Palestinians in occupied East Jerusalem to vote remains uncertain. Israel bans all Palestinian political activity in Jerusalem, but Palestinian leaders insist voting be held in the city's east, which they claim as the capital of a future Palestinian state.

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