



Joint Press Statement

Afghanistan 2018 Parliamentary Elections

Kabul- Afghan people created some beautiful and unique images in this year's parliamentary elections, images of practicing democracy and a strong will to determine their fate and a positive change toward development of the country. Alongside the voters, more than 11400 observers were deployed in 33 provinces by a group of civil society organizations including: Training Human Rights Association for Afghan Women (THRA), Transparent Election Foundation of Afghanistan (TEFA), Election and Transparency Watch Organization of Afghanistan (ETWA), Free and Fair Election Forum of Afghanistan (FEFA), Afghanistan Civil Society Forum-organization (ACSFo), and Afghanistan Amputee Bicyclists for Rehabilitation and Recreation (AABRAR) to observe the candidates' campaign activities, and voting and counting processes in the election days.

Over the last fifteen years, Afghan people have been and still are practicing democracy in different stages of formation of the political and social foundations. In the 2018 parliamentary election, people seem to be demanding a fundamental change; a change in their political destiny by choosing their true representatives to occupy the parliamentary seats. The impressive and admirable participation of the people in this election was evidence of this will.

The 2018 elections began with enthusiasm and passion among voters waiting in long queues and widespread participation of women and youth gave it a different look. This time, Afghan Security Forces performed very well without the presence of international forces. The media also played their role very well by continuous coverage, avoiding the dissemination of news that could weaken the voters' morale, reflecting the widespread turnout and encouraging people to vote. In addition, civil society organizations have tried their best to prevent various forms of fraud and corruption and secure the will of people in choosing their true representatives by observing different stages of the election through deployment of a large number of observers throughout the country.

The enthusiasm and widespread presence of people in the early hours of the election was unfortunately challenged by some failures in the performance and management of polling centers, and a number of voters failed to vote despite waiting in long queues for hours. Unfortunately, the main reason for most of the problems and challenges was the lack of coordination and poor performance of the IEC. Our observations and reports from our observers indicate that there have been many problems and challenges during the parliamentary elections. Some of the main ones are listed as following:

- Lack of coordination and poor management in controlling the polling centers by the Independent Election Commission that caused late opening in many polling centers;
- Problems caused by the voter lists including lack of the lists in a notable number of centers, sending lists to wrong polling stations, missing some of the names started with certain letters such as k, g, a and so on in the lists;

- The problems caused by biometric devices due to inadequate training and lack of familiarity of the Commission staff with the correct use of these devices, their failure and the lack of effective technical support to quickly resolve the issues;
- Violation of the Election Law in the extension of election for the second day.
- Misconduct and Violation of electoral law and regulations by some representatives of parties and candidates such as electoral campaigns and forcing and bribing the voters to vote in their favor;

In order to improve the conduct of elections in the country, as an independent and impartial group we have the following suggestions and recommendations for different stakeholders of the elections:

To the Independent Election Commission:

- Respecting the law, regulations and procedures for making important decisions such as the extension of the election for the second day and considering the opinions of all stakeholders in such cases;
- Paying attention to professional training of IEC staff and their fundamental role in voting process and preventing waste of time;
- Establishing an effective communication system between observers, monitors and IEC staff at different levels;
- Revising the delegation of duties and use of teachers as temporary staff of the IEC;
- Learning from lessons of implementing voter lists and biometric in the future elections.
- On-time announcement of the primary and final results

To the voters: Proper use of their right to vote as a powerful tool in securing their social and citizenship rights and the fundamental duty of each voter.

To the security forces:

- Maintaining impartiality in elections process and refrain from working in favor of any candidate;
- Providing security for monitors and observers as one of the key levers in the electoral process;
- Training of security forces on the roles, duties and responsibilities of all stakeholders in the election, including observers, monitors, candidates, political parties, and others involved.

To the International Community: Continuing cooperation and financial and technical support to electoral reforms and elections process.

To the political parties, candidates, and their agents:

- Coordination and cooperation with other observer groups;
- Training delegates and observers about their responsibilities, rights and authorities;
- Respecting the elections law and regulations and avoiding violation of them.

To the Electoral Complaints Commission:

ECC has a final and critical role in the elections process and its credibility. Taking into consideration the experience of the last elections and the elections day management shortcomings, we strongly recommend that ECC shall:

- observe and make any decision based and in line with the electoral approved law, regulations and procedures;
- ensure transparency and information sharing to public on its procedures and day to day achievements;
- establish the right and trustful circle to seek advice and consultation if cases of conflict arises; and
- share no sensitive information or decision before the final approval that can become the bases of propaganda.

To the future parliamentary representatives: Revising and amendment of the election law and regulations in light of the amassed experiences.