



Press Statement

Oct 20, 2018

ETWA Press Statement on Voting Process of 2018 Parliamentary Elections

Remarkably high turnout in 2018 Parliamentary Elections in spite of security threats and current political tensions in the country show the citizens commitment to democracy. ETWA would like to express its appreciation to the voters, candidates, observer groups and media that played a vital role in encouraging citizens participation in elections, public awareness, ensuring transparency and inclusiveness of the process.

ETWA observers in addition to noting high turnout, reported a great deal of irregularities resulting from mismanagement of the Independent Elections Commission (IEC) that was noticed in a considerable number of polling centers covered. This questions the IEC and government commitment towards practicing democracy in the country.

Administration of Elections

Administrative and management irregularities have been reported by ETWA observers from a great number of polling centers covered during opening and even voting of elections. Most of the polling centers mentioned kicked off with delay due to either shortage of electoral materials or absence of polling staff.

Bio metric System

Usage of bio metric system on election day did not gain optimal result in a remarkable number of polling centers observed as there are reports of malfunction or unfamiliarity of the IEC staff with the system. As a result, voting in the mentioned centers was undertaken without using bio metric system.

Voter List

ETWA observers noticed irregularities in preparation and distribution of voters lists as some centers lacked this list, some voters could not find their name in the lists and some lists appear to mistakenly distributed. Problems with voter lists caused voting to be undertaken based on the stickers of the voters' ID (Tazkera) contrary to voting procedures.



Decisions of the IEC

The IEC decision to extend voting timeline and postpone elections in those polling centers that remained closed on election day to Sunday, Oct 21 could impact transparency of the process. There are concerns that not only does the decision limit observation of candidate, observer groups and media, it also provides opportunity for fraud and misuse. As such will impact turnout specially women participation and reduce citizens' confidence in the elections process.

Impartiality of IEC Staff and Government Officials

ETWA observers reported cases of partiality of the IEC staff and government officials from a number of provinces covered.

However, some candidates and their agents also caused disorder, physical violence, intimidation of voters and even temporary closure of a number of polling centers observed.

Recommendations:

- Since bio metric system has not been used properly in most of the polling centers observed, the IEC should take specific measures for counting and aggregating votes in order to distinct valid votes from invalid ones so that voting rights of the citizens is protected and candidates' contentment is obtained.
- The IEC is called on to take the required steps necessary for maintenance of electoral materials that remained in the centers where election has been postponed and make sure such materials are kept in safe places and there is zero chance for misuse, fraud and rigging.
- The IEC is requested to take specific measures in advance for audit and recounting processes considering the current situation and facilitate presence of observers and candidates' agents in the next phases of the process.
- Considering the mentioned irregularities, the Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC) should be well prepared for impartial and fair review and adjudication of electoral complaints to help revive the credibility of the process.
- Political parties and candidates are kindly asked to prevent from prejudgment and persuade their supporters to stay calm and submit their complaints through legal channels given the current political and security situation of the country.

Contact: 0706706720—0787301025

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