



AL-HAYAT CENTER FOR CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT
2007 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION OBSERVATION

PRESS STATEMENT

**VOTING PROCESS MARRED BY VIOLENCE, VOTE BUYING AND
BREACHING THE SECRECY OF THE VOTE**

November 20, 2007: 6:00 pm

Al-Hayat has deployed 1,500 trained youth to observe the voting process throughout Jordan. Since the early hours of the morning, Al-Hayat observers have been witnessing the opening procedures from outside the polling centers. Al-Hayat's goal of observing the 2007 Parliamentary election is to promote transparency and observe the integrity of the election process.

Violent clashes between candidate supporters have been reported

Al-Hayat observers have frequently reported cases of violence between different candidates' supporters. The widespread violence has the potential to overshadow the voting process and it has seriously hindered voters' rights to freely access polling centers. The multiple cases of violence throughout Jordan risk undermining voters' confidence in the freedom and the fairness of the electoral process.

Observers reported that fights broke out between supporters of different candidates in Tafilah, Irbid and Mafraq. In Amman, clashes broke out between citizens and police.

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Voting process observations

In Mafraq, 4 citizens were arrested for attempting to vote multiple times and 6 citizens were arrested for forging their identification cards. Several supporters of one candidate were arrested in Balqa'a for forging identification cards. This candidate was subsequently summoned by the Governor. In Madaba 1st district, a citizen was arrested when he tried to vote with another voter's identification.

Vote buying and breaching the secrecy of voting

Al-Hayat observers report a significant level of serious electoral irregularities including vote buying, breaching the secrecy of voting, bussing of voters, and the use of improper identification by voters. In addition, voters have complained about the accuracy of voters' lists. Voters stated they were unable to vote because the computer system showed they had already voted, even though they stated they had not.

Many observers reported vote buying, include in the 4th district in Irbid where the son of a candidate was arrested. Also, in the 1st, 2nd and 5th districts in Amman, vote buying was observed. Cases were also reported in Ajloun and Tafilah, and in Mafraq a candidate was arrested. In Zarqa a candidate supporter was arrested for vote buying, while a relative of another candidate was escorted out of the polling station for vote buying.

Observers continued to report cases of computers malfunctioning or breaking down, including in Ajloun, Mafraq and Jerash. In Jarash (Lubabah Bint Al-Hareth school and Marsa' school for boys), several incidents of power shortages were reported.

Complaints over inaccurate voters' lists have been recorded in Mafraq, Amman, North Badia, and Madaba. In Mafraq 1st district, voters were informed that the computer system showed they had already voted or that the lists did not show their names. Similar cases were reported in Jarash, Amman 1st and 2nd districts, Tafilah 1st district, Madaba 1st district, and several polling centers in North Badia. Similarly, several families in Mafraq reported that when they showed up at the polling stations, they were told that someone had already voted on their behalf.

Secrecy of the voting was reported to be breached in Irbid, Tafilah and Mafraq. The reports varied as to how the breaches occurred. In Irbid 3rd district, the majority of the people voting at Dair Yousef School reportedly voted as illiterates. Similar reports arrived from Mafraq. In other reports, people were pressured by candidates' representatives to breach their right to secrecy in relation with vote buying.

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Active campaigning hinders voters' free access to polling centers

Al-Hayat observers continued to report on active campaigning in the vast majority of the polling stations throughout Jordan. Candidates' supporters have reportedly been interacting with voters as they approach voting premises. Al-Hayat finds this campaigning in violation of voters' right to freely enter a voting premise without impediment.

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