

The National Democratic Institute (NDI) is conducting an observation mission and analyzing Afghanistan's electoral process before, during and after the 2014 presidential and provincial council elections.

## Coalition of media outlets to boycott reporting of Taliban attacks

A coalition of Afghan media organizations has pledged not to report on Taliban attacks during the second round of voting on June 14. The organizations also stated that they would refrain from excessive reporting of attacks during the campaign period.

The decision to boycott news related to the Taliban on election day was one of 11 provisions included in a declaration issued at the end of the National Conference of Directors of Afghanistan's Media Organizations on May 26. Approximately 120 representatives of media organizations attended the event, which focused on the role of the media during the runoff election.

Mujib Khalwatgar, Executive Director of the nongovernmental group Nai, told NDI that the Afghan media has been accused of overstating the influence and capability of the Taliban. The decision to boycott Taliban-related news on election day was an attempt to remedy that perception.

Fahim Dashti, Executive Director of the Afghanistan National Journalists' Union and former editor of the now-defunct Kabul Weekly newspaper, told NDI that the decision to refrain from reporting on the Taliban could increase voter turnout. "If the media headlines are covered with insurgency attacks and chaos in polling centers, it would definitely impact people's turnout in the election," said Dashti.

Heshmatullah Radfar, deputy director of the Independent Electoral Commission's Media Commission, told NDI that the Commission does not endorse the news blackout. He said that people have the right to know what is happening on election day and media organizations should report security-related news, as long as they refrain from "overstatement."

Participants at the conference also pledged to avoid exploiting issues of ethnicity, religion or language during the runoff campaign. In addition, the 11-point declaration included promises to report news impartially, avoid the spread of rumors about candidates and educate the public about the electoral process.

## Wages of first round female body searchers still outstanding as IEC recruits for second round

Payments are still being processed for female body searchers from six provinces who were posted to polling centers during the April 5 elections, according to the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). Payments have been made for female body searchers from the remaining 28 provinces.

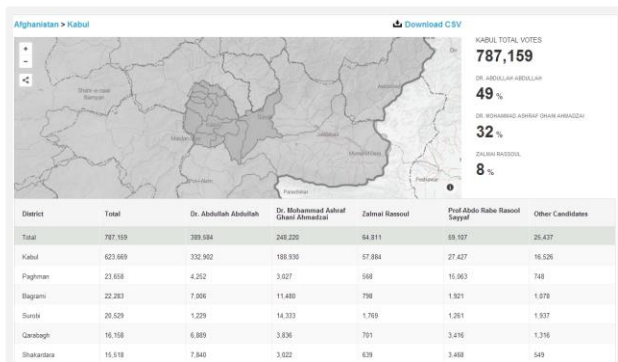
In addition to the body searchers from these six provinces, as many as 2,700 female body searchers from other provinces have yet to be paid. The IEC told NDI that the names of some of these body searchers were not on the final list of recruits, while others requesting payment did not report for duty on April 5. The Ministry of Interior (MOI) said that approximately 1,000 of 12,844 female body searchers trained for the April 5 vote did not turn up on the day of the election.

The IEC and MOI had aimed to recruit 13,000 female body searchers for the April 5 elections. For the second round, they plan to recruit 12,846, allowing for two female body searchers at each polling center. The Afghan Civil Society Network is assisting with recruitment.

The MOI said that female body searchers for the runoff election will be paid 1,750 afghanis (approximately USD \$30), while male chaperones accompanying female body searchers will be eligible to receive 1,750 afghanis. Female body searchers recruited for the first round elections were paid 5,000 afghanis (approximately USD \$86).

## NDI launches interactive map detailing district-level results of April 5 presidential election

Afghan political actors, civic organizations and members of the international community are now able to analyze data from Afghanistan's April 5 elections down to the district and polling center level using a new interactive map released by NDI. The map is available on NDI's Afghanistan Election Data website at <http://2014.afghanistanelectiondata.org/results/>.



The interactive map provides an opportunity to analyze results data in more depth, and the website makes its data available for download in machine-readable CSV format for additional analysis.

The 2014 data complements data from every national election in Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban, enabling users to examine voting patterns over five electoral cycles.

NDI plans to update the data website throughout the 2014 electoral cycle. Prior to the June 14 runoff vote, NDI will publish interactive visualizations on candidate performance and polling center closures.

The website uses 2014 results data made public by Afghanistan's Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). The release of this data by the IEC marks an improvement in transparency over previous elections.

## IEC's Media Commission pushes media outlets to pay fines related to first round violations

All but two media outlets that were penalized for breaching electoral regulations during the first round elections have now paid their fines, according to the Independent Electoral Commission's (IEC) Media Commission.

On May 12, the Media Commission called on 14 media groups to pay the fines they had received for failing to comply with electoral regulations during the official campaign period and silence period. Heshmatullah Radfar, the Media Commission's deputy director, told NDI that the Media Commission had asked the IEC to revoke the accreditation of media organizations that refused to pay their fines. He added that most had paid their fines following a meeting with media representatives on May 28.

If the two remaining media groups do not pay their fines by election day, Radfar said, their accreditation will be revoked. As a result, the organizations would not have access to polling centers, press conferences or other election-related venues.

Media organizations will be subject to the same regulations during the second round election, said Radfar, including providing equal and unbiased coverage to both candidates. The Media Commission's third-party media monitoring activities indicate that the majority of broadcast media outlets provided equal airtime to both presidential candidates during the first week of campaigning for the runoff.

However, the Media Commission noted bias in the coverage of media outlets that were sanctioned during the first round. Rah-e-Farda TV, Noor TV and Khawar TV showed bias in favor of Abdullah Abdullah, while Afghan TV, Aina TV, Batur TV and Negah TV favored Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai.

### Brief Updates

- The IECC stated that it would not be able to process all complaints related to the provincial council elections by June 12 as planned, further delaying the announcement of final results.
- The Ministry of Defense announced that 3,000 new security personnel have been trained to provide security for the June 14 presidential runoff election, Tolo News reports.
- The Ministry of Interior is conducting a security assessment of polling centers, which includes determining whether those closed during the first round can be opened on June 14.
- The IEC's head of field operations was injured by an improvised explosive device that detonated while he was travelling in Kabul on May 29.



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**2014 INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION – ANALYTICAL MISSION TO AFGHANISTAN**

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