

The National Democratic Institute (NDI) is conducting an observation mission and analyzing Afghanistan's electoral process before, during and after the April 5 presidential and provincial council elections.

## Candidates seek backing from former rivals as runoff campaign approaches

The campaigns of Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai and Abdullah Abdullah are aiming to shore up support among voters, political parties and fellow politicians in advance of the second round presidential election on June 14.

The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) announced the final results of the April 5 presidential election on May 15 following decisions by the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission (IECC) on complaints related to the preliminary results. The final results indicated that Abdullah Abdullah received 45 percent of the vote and Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai received 31.56 percent.

Members of both campaigns met with representatives of former presidential candidate Abdul Rab Rassoul Sayyaf last week in hopes of gaining his support during the runoff. Sayyaf received 7.04 percent of the vote in the first round, placing him fourth out of eight candidates.

Abdullah received a boost on May 11 when Zalmay Rassoul, who placed third in the first round of the elections, pledged his support for Abdullah's campaign. Rassoul's endorsement could prove crucial to Abdullah in Afghanistan's southern provinces. In Kandahar, for example, Rassoul received 53.96 percent of the vote, while Abdullah secured only 10.61 percent. Ghani received 13.9 percent of the vote in Kandahar.

Mohammad Shafiq Gul Agha Sherzai also pledged his support to Abdullah. Although Sherzai received only 1.6 percent of the vote nationwide, he could help deliver votes to Abdullah in the southern region. Sherzai placed sixth nationally and came in second after Rassoul in Kandahar, receiving 16.02 percent of the province's vote. Sherzai also received 12.98 percent of the vote in Helmand and 14.93 percent in Uruzgan.

There are disagreements within the campaign teams of Rassoul and Sherzai as to who to support. Rassoul's vice presidential candidate, Ahmad Zia Massoud, did not endorse Abdullah and did not attend Abdullah and Rassoul's joint press conference. While Sherzai himself has expressed support for Abdullah, 20 of Sherzai's provincial campaign managers gathered in Kabul to announce their support for Ghani.

Ghani received his first endorsement from a presidential candidate on May 21, when Mohammad Daoud Sultanzyoy announced that he would support Ghani in the runoff election. Sultanzyoy received 0.46 percent of the vote in the first round, placing him seventh out of eight candidates.



*Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai, IEC chairman Yousuf Nuristani and Abdullah Abdullah met at the IEC headquarters on May 17 to discuss the second round of the presidential election.*

*Source: The IEC's Facebook page*

## **Preliminary provincial council results announced as IECC continues investigations**

The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) on May 20 announced the results of the provincial council elections, while the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission (IECC) continues to process approximately 1,000 complaints.

The IECC on May 11 instructed its provincial offices to complete their investigations and send decisions to the central office in Kabul for assessment and final decisions. Provincial IECC (PIECC) offices sent these decisions to the central office by May 19.

The PIECC in Balkh received 10 complaints that fell into category "A," or those that could impact the final results. The PIECC in Ghor recounted 61 ballot boxes and sent the results to Kabul for final assessment. The PIECC said that it invalidated four boxes from an area that the Taliban attacked on Election Day, forcing election workers to flee. The PIECC in Laghman invalidated ballot boxes from areas where polling stations were closed.

The IEC will allow complaints on the preliminary results to be registered for 24 hours from the time they are announced. The IECC will then investigate those complaints and provide its decisions to the IEC, which is expected to announce final provincial council election results on June 7.

## **Domestic election observer groups issue recommendations for second round**

A coalition of domestic election observation organizations issued a set of recommendations to the IEC and IECC aimed at improving the second round presidential election. The recommendations include the following:

- To increase the transparency of the complaints adjudication process, the IECC should allow observers to monitor decision-making process with regard to complaints.
- The IEC should inform observer organizations when they assign male staff to female polling stations. During the first round of the elections, some female observers refused to go to polling stations staffed by male workers.
- The IEC should accredit new observers for the runoff election. Since observers that were connected to candidates in the first round may not participate in the second round, additional observers will be needed.
- Security forces should maintain the professional conduct that they exhibited in the first round of the elections. In addition, community leaders and civil society organizations should help recruit female body searchers for female polling stations.
- The media should continue to keep citizens informed about election-related developments and encourage Afghans to participate in the elections. In addition, the IEC's media commission should continue to monitor the media to ensure that it complies with the country's laws and regulations.

### **Brief Updates**

- The IEC announced that it plans to open as many as 4,000 new polling sites for the second round presidential election, Tolo News reported. In the first round, 20,561 polling stations were opened, although 777 reported no votes.
- According to the timeline provided by the IEC, the presidential runoff election will take place on June 14 and preliminary results will be announced on July 2. The IECC will send final decisions on complaints to the IEC on July 16 and the final results will be announced on July 17.
- The IEC on May 18 notified its staff that employees will be dismissed if fraud takes place in the designated area under his or her supervision in the second round presidential election, Tolo News reported. The IEC dismissed approximately 3,300 employees involved in irregularities during the first round.
- All materials procured overseas for the second round election arrived in Kabul by May 12. Electoral workers began packing the materials on May 14.