

# NDI AFGHANISTAN ELECTIONS UPDATE

Issue 1, October 30, 2009 (E-day minus 8)

Afghanistan's November 7 Presidential Runoff



**Official Name:**  
AFGHANISTAN

**Population:** 28.4 million  
(July 2009 est.)

**Area:** 652,230 sq miles  
(roughly the size of Texas)

**Languages:** Dari (official) 50%, Pashto (official) 35%,  
Turkic languages (primarily Uzbek and Turkmen) 11%,  
30 minor languages (primarily Balochi and Pashtai) 4%

**Literacy:** 28.1%

**Religion:** Sunni Muslim 80%, Shia Muslim 19%,  
other 1%

**GDP:** \$22.27 billion (2008 est.)

**Number of Provinces:** 34

**Registered Voters:** 15.6 million (NATO est.)

**KEY ELECTION DATES:**

**Nov. 4:** End of campaign period

**Nov. 4 and 5:** Polling station staff training by district field coordinators

**Nov. 5:** Distribution of election materials to polling centers

**Nov. 7:** Presidential runoff

**IEC ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

**Estimated number of polling centers:** 6,322 (6,306 centers opened on Aug. 20)

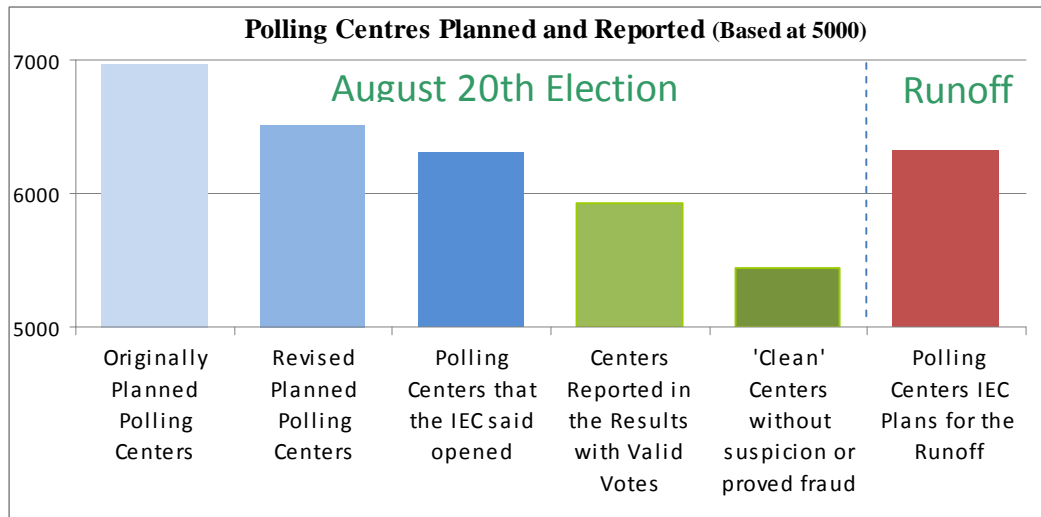
**Number of district field coordinators:** 3,054 (200 have been blacklisted)

**Candidate agents must re-register:** For the Aug. 20 polling, Karzai registered some 10,500 and Abdullah registered 7,000

*On Nov. 7, Afghanistan will hold its presidential runoff election between incumbent President Hamid Karzai and former foreign minister Abdullah Abdullah. As part of NDI's long-term observation of the 2009 elections, NDI is fielding a team of analysts to follow developments in the runoff and provide an independent assessment of the process.*

**IEC ANNOUNCES AMBITIOUS NUMBER OF POLLING CENTERS**

During the Aug. 20 balloting, the Independent Election Commission (IEC) overestimated its ability to field polling centers and have them return clean results. This is also a concern for the second round. On Oct. 29, the IEC announced it would be opening 6,322 polling centers on Nov. 7. This is a slight increase over the number of centers the IEC actually opened for the Aug. 20 elections. In round one, the IEC planned to open nearly 7,000 sites, but only 6,306 actually opened; and only 5,932 of those had votes that were included in the results. Only 5,438 centers were without suspicion or proved fraud.



**ELECTION SECURITY UPDATE**

◆ **UN personnel killed in siege of Kabul guest house**

◆ **Smoke mortar hits Serena Hotel, aimed at presidential palace**

The Taliban has continued its stated strategy to disrupt the election process. On Oct. 28, three gunmen dressed as Afghan National Police stormed a guest house in Kabul where UN staff were living. It is believed the hotel was targeted because of the large number of internationals there who were specifically involved in the election process. Five UN election staff were killed. In the wake of the attacks, UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon is insisting the organization step up the protection to UN personnel in Afghanistan. The siege has demoralized many UN election workers in Afghanistan and some have left the country.

Across the country, Afghan voters have received renewed threats of violence in the run up to the Nov. 7 election. These threats are not limited to the south and southeast. For example, in the northern Balkh province on Oct. 25, 15 to 20 insurgents entered a mosque and told worshippers not to participate in the polling.

## **ELECTION OFFICIALS VETTED**

Corrupt and incompetent election officials have been targeted for removal by the IEC. Provincial election officials were suspended in seven provinces. Observers are seeing a number of new personnel brought in to take these positions. In Kabul province, for example, of the 200 district field coordinators (DFCs), 98 are new coordinators.

Following performance reviews from the Aug. 20 polling, the commission has blacklisted 200 DFCs. The IEC said in a statement on Oct. 29 that it had hired a total of 3,054 DFCs for the second round. However, NDI observers note that not all the slots have been filled to date. In Nuristan province, for example, the scheduled DFC training was postponed until the recruitment is complete. In Kandahar, the three day training scheduled for Oct. 27, 28 and 29 began two days late because materials were delayed.

NDI attended the most recent round of DFC training. Observers found the sessions to be of inconsistent quality and the officials attending varied in experience and competence. The district field coordinators will be conducting the training of the polling station officials. NDI observers are concerned that insufficient training and lax recruitment standards will result in poorly trained election officials at every level.

## **CANDIDATE AGENTS MUST RE-REGISTER**

The IEC is requiring the two presidential campaigns to submit their candidate agents for a new round of registration. The requirement places additional burden on the campaigns. However, the IEC needed to find a way to exclude the agents that had been registered for other presidential candidates in the first round. As of July 30, the Karzai campaign had registered about 10,500 candidate agents, and the Abdullah campaign had registered about 7,000 agents. It is still unclear how many agents each campaign actually fielded or how successful the agents were at collecting quality information for the complaints process.

## **NDI'S OBSERVATION MISSION**

NDI has been observing the ongoing electoral process in Afghanistan since early this year. For the Aug. 20 presidential and provincial council polls, the Institute fielded a mission that mobilized more than 100 international and Afghan observers

to observe every aspect of the process, including the campaign, balloting on election day and the post-election period. After election day, NDI continued to monitor the presidential and provincial council vote tally as well as the complaints process.

For the runoff, NDI is conducting an analytical mission to look into pre-election, election day and post-election events. A team of international election analysts, based in Kabul, are covering key issues such as electoral administration, security of the elections, women's participation as well as regional developments. The effort includes a specific focus on the southern and eastern regions, areas of the country that experienced serious problems around the Aug. 20 elections. NDI is also gathering information through a broad network of partners and sources across the country, including its offices and staff in Balkh, Bamiyan, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, Khost, Kunduz and Nangarhar. On election day, 40 of the Institute's national and international staff, based in Kabul and the regions, will visit polling sites and collect information on election day activities. The team of analysts will remain in-country to observe post-election activity.

The Institute's election observation mission in Afghanistan is funded through a grant from the U.S. Agency for International Development.

For more information, please contact:  
Paul Rowland, Mission Director  
Kabul Cell +93 (0) 793155295  
[paulr@ndi.org](mailto:paulr@ndi.org)

