

# NDI AFGHANISTAN ELECTION UPDATE

Issue 2, November 1, 2009 (E-day minus 6)

Afghanistan's November 7 Presidential Run-off



**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

**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 run-off

**Nov. 8:** Tally Begins

**FIRST ROUND STATS:**

**Total uncertified votes:**  
5,662,758 (IEC)

**Total final certified votes:**  
4,597,727 (IEC)

**Karzai vote percentage:**  
49.67% (IEC certified result)

**Abdullah vote percentage:**  
30.59% (IEC certified result)

*On November 7, 2009, Afghanistan will hold its Presidential Run-off 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 run-off and provide an independent assessment of the process.*

**ABDULLAH "WILL NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE ELECTION"**

On the morning of Nov. 1, presidential candidate Abdullah Abdullah announced he "will not participate" in the upcoming run-off election. In a press conference, Abdullah outlined several grievances about Afghanistan's electoral process. He said, for example, the Independent Election Commission (IEC) favored Karzai and that government resources were used to support the president's campaign. Abdullah believes that no major steps have been taken by the Afghan government to fix problems that allowed wide-scale fraud in the Aug. 20 polling. Over the past several weeks, Abdullah has demanded the removal of the head of the IEC, the suspension of several ministers, and the ability for his campaign to observe all meetings at the IEC data center. For the announcement, broadcast live across the world, Abdullah gathered major political figures in opposition to Karzai.



Abdullah, right, campaigned on an anti-corruption platform with running mates Chergah Ali Chergah, left, and Humayun Shah Asefi, center

**WHAT THE LAW SAYS—AND DOESN'T SAY**

The Afghan Constitution and Electoral Law are silent when it comes to a candidate stepping down at this stage in the electoral process. At the staff level at the IEC there are differences of opinion as to how to interpret existing legal guidelines with regards to withdrawal of the candidate.

According to a literal reading of the electoral law, a run-off election can only be held between the "two most voted candidates." This would exclude the possibility of Abdullah being replaced on the ballot with the third ranking candidate, Bashedost. The IEC is allowed to postpone the election "if unpredictable events or situations make the holding of an election impossible, or seriously threaten the legitimacy of an election."

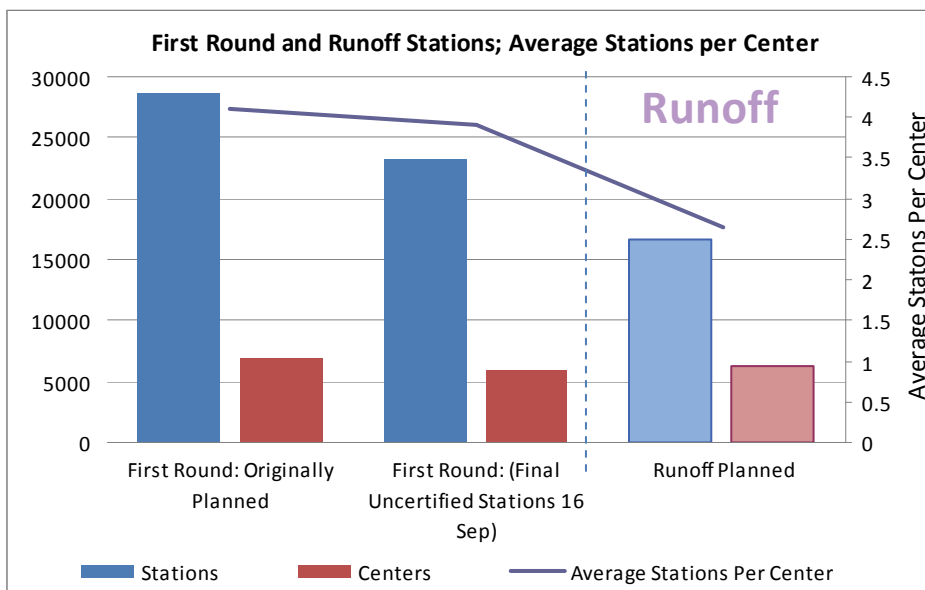
## WHERE'S THE CAMPAIGNING?

The campaign period for the run-off began on Oct. 24. NDI observers have noticed that across the country campaigning has been subdued when compared with the first round. Even before Abdullah announced that he would not participate in the runoff, his supporters had only held a few rallies and had not posted new campaign signs.

Karzai's supporters have held campaign events, but rallies have been much smaller than those held for the first round. In Herat, for example, Karzai supporters held rallies in mosques and at tribal gatherings. In Jalalabad, the largest pro-Karzai rally was held on Oct. 24 and brought together only about 1,500 supporters. Fundraising for the run-off campaigns was limited given the short period between the IEC announcement and the scheduled election day.

## POLLING STATIONS CONSOLIDATED

While the number of planned polling centers has increased to 6,322 from 6,306 in the first round, the IEC has decided to reduce the number of polling stations it would operate inside these polling centers. Between one and 15 polling stations comprise each polling center. The total number of polling stations within the polling centers will decrease from approximately 23,324\* in the first round to 16,676 in the run-off, according to the IEC polling center and station list from Aug. 25. The decision was made after reviewing the voter turnout for the Aug. 20 elections. Fewer polling stations requires fewer election staff for the IEC to train and manage.



## REGION IN FOCUS: EAST

Campaigning for the run-off has not been as heated in eastern Afghanistan in comparison to the first round. In Nangarhar province, the campaigns have been overshadowed by protests over the IEC's delay in releasing provisional provincial council results from Aug. 20. Demonstrations have closed schools and obstructed the critical supply road from Kabul to Jalalabad. Some 250 disgruntled candidates protested in front of the provincial IEC building on Oct. 29. Nangarhar is the only province without results. The Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC) has yet to finish investigating some 100 complaints alleging corruption and fraud.



Nangarhar candidates protest the delay in release of PC results

Security in Nangarhar has remained relatively calm. Neighboring Kunar province has seen an increase in militant attacks. Insurgents control parts of the remote Nuristan province and fighting there will reduce the IEC's ability to open polling centers in those areas.

## NDI'S OBSERVATION MISSION

NDI has been observing the ongoing electoral process in Afghanistan since early this year. For the August 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.

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

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\* IEC Uncertified Final Results