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AL-Noor Universal Foundation (NUF)



Long-Term Observation Report

Preliminary Voter Lists Publication

(May 12 to May 2019 ,19)

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In May 2019, Al-Nour Universal Foundation (NUF) launched a project titled Noorakib, which aims to enhance voter confidence in the electoral process and to ensure the integrity, impartiality, and fairness of the electoral process through honest and effective long-term monitoring. The project is being implemented in eight provinces: Anbar, Basra, Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk, Najaf, Ninawa, and Salahuddin. The project is conducted with support from the National Democratic Institute (NDI).

Between May 12 and May 19, 2019, the Iraqi High Elections Commission (IHEC)

published the preliminary voters list online so the public could verify the voters' information and submit complaints in case the information was inconsistent or inaccurate. During this time, 906 voter registration centers also posted physical copies of the preliminary voters list so voters could come in and check their data. In the target provinces, according to the IHEC, the number of registration centers were as follows: Anbar (71), Baghdad (208), Basra (76), Diyala (41), Kirkuk (43), Najaf (30), Ninawa (140), and Salahaddin (38).

Al-Noor monitors observed the following aspects of this process:

- A Displaying voter lists at registration centers
- B The reliability of the online registration system
- C Complaints and appeals made at the voter registration center level
- D The consistency of the statistics released by the IHEC regarding the voter registration period.

Methodology

During the period covered by this report, Al-Noor Universal Foundation observed 64 voter registration centers. To do so, al-Noor deployed a long-term observation mission of 42 monitors, including supervisors and long-term observers (LTOs). Al-Noor deployed the LTOs based on a traditional deployment method where long-term observers monitored the voter registration centers located in easily accessible areas. To ensure comparability of data, the Foundation used standardized methodology, including data-collection forms, analysis, and training of observers.

Observation Findings

Independent High Electoral Commission

(Registration verification online application):

The Foundation appreciates the launch of an online application for voters to check their registration information, which was a useful method for voters to verify their information. In addition, the Foundation acknowledges IHEC's efforts towards increasing the transparency of the process and building voters' confidence. The Foundation notes that the application worked properly without any technical difficulties throughout the reporting period.

Monitoring the Preliminary Voter Lists Publication:

NUF observers recorded a delay in the display of the preliminary voter lists in all the 64 voter registration centers visited. According to IHEC regulation no. 1/2019, the lists should have been displayed the day after the end of the voter registration period, but delays ranged from 1 to 3 days. The most frequent reason for these delays was that some heads of registration offices had to split their time between their registration office and the provincial office of IHEC, where they had to attend internal meetings.

This affected the working hours of the registration offices, as offices were closed when the person in charge was not present, leading to delays in completing tasks. Additionally, NUF observers noted inconsistent working procedures in voter registration centers across the target provinces, despite IHEC regulation no. 1/2019 detailing these procedures. For example, NUF observers noted that in 6 percent of the voter registration centers visited the preliminary voter list was not displayed in a way that ensured good visibility for civil society observers, political party agents, and voters. In addition, the observers reported that the list of deceased voters who had their voter card retrieved was not displayed in 3 percent of the voter registration centers monitored. Finally, in 7 percent of the monitored voter registration centers, the official registration forms no. 1 and no. 4 were not displayed in accordance with regulations.

Biometric Voter Data Update (and biometric voter cards): After analyzing the voter registration and voter register update process reports, the Foundation notes that the total number of eligible voters in Iraq as of 2019 is 24,907,679 in total, out of which only 13,700,855 voters are biometrically registered after the last voter registration period that ended on May 11, 2019. As a result, 11,699,774 citizens will not be able to vote if they don't take the necessary steps to update their biometric information before August 18, 2019.

Moreover, the Foundation notes that the same report indicates that the IHEC issued 14,217,801 biometric voter cards but only distributed 10,734,174, leaving 3,487,212 cards not yet retrieved by the voters. It should be noted that there is also a discrepancy between the number of voters who are biometrically registered to vote (13,700,855) and the number of biometric cards issued (14,217,801), with a difference of 516,946 surplus biometric cards.

In Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Baghdad, Ninewa, and Salahaddin, a relatively large number of voters are registered with "unreadable" fingerprints. [There](#) natively high numbers of "unreadable" fingerprints might be the result of low quality registration equipment used to register voters' fingerprints or it might be an early sign of electoral fraud. The numbers are particularly notable in Ninewa, where 54,557 out of 479,062 voters registered with "unreadable" fingerprints, I think what you're implying here is that even so, this number is higher than the expected number of diabetics and amputees - if so we should add language stating this I removed the part discussing the "exemptions" since we couldn't find any written procedure or regulation with details regarding this point. Rather, the provincial offices informally make these exemptions. So we are not sure why there are such high number of unreadable fingerprints. Al Noor reached out to IHEC and got told that the IHEC will "look into it".

Form no.1 is a standard form used by voter registration agents to add, update or correct voters' information.

Form no.4 is a form used when deleting a deceased voter's name or changing the voter's voting station.

According to the complaints and appeals on the preliminary voter lists period the IHEC shall present the following items at every voter registration center: the preliminary voters list; the standardized registration forms n.1 and n.4; the electronic voters' database; and the names of deceased voters whom their biometric cards has been retrieved to enable voters, party agents and political parties to audit them.

Formally obtained from the IHEC

Recommendations

After analyzing the voter registration process monitoring findings recorded during the period covered by this report, Al-Noor Foundation makes the following recommendations:

- We urge the provincial IHEC offices to comply with all procedures and decisions issued by the IHEC National Office regarding the presentation of the voter register within the time frame defined and to follow the procedures in a consistent manner. We encourage the IHEC to place greater attention on training quality control and to ensure a proper training that covers all aspects of the voter registration process including the publication of the voter lists.
- We reiterate our call on all actors in the electoral process, including political entities, civil society organizations, and media, to reinvigorate civic and voter education efforts to ensure that all Iraqis understand how elections relate to citizen rights and responsibilities and how they can make informed choices. We stress the need for a large awareness campaign by all stakeholders to urge voters with an old card to update their biometric information and receive their biometric card before August 18, 2019.
- In line with the international principles of transparency and access to information, we recommend that the IHEC takes urgent steps to audit the internal systems for data collection and compilation and to review all the statistical information regarding voter registration and updates to the voter register to ensure that figures, such as the number of registered voters and the number of biometric voter cards issued, are accurate and logically consistent.

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