



People's Assembly Elections – First Round

Final Statement

November 30, 2011

First Round of Voting Largely Peaceful Despite Weak & Inconsistent Election Administration *Observers denied access or expelled from polling stations and active political campaigning problematic*

Project Rakeeb is joint collaboration between two Egyptian civil society organizations – the Egyptian Association for Community Participation Enhancement (EACPE) and the Egyptian Association for Development and Dissemination of Legal Awareness (EADDLA). Drawing upon best practices of citizen observers from around the world, and adapting them to the unique Egyptian context, Project Rakeeb is combining statistical principles with state-of-the-art information and communications technology to implement an observation methodology known as “Parallel Vote Tabulation.”

For the three rounds of Egypt's first post-revolution People's Assembly Elections, Project Rakeeb is deploying 1,267 citizen observers across Egypt to a statistically-sound, random, and representative sample of polling stations. During the two-day first round of voting, Project Rakeeb deployed 413 non-partisan citizen observers to sample of polling stations in all nine governorates. On both election days, Rakeeb observers sent observation reports via text message to a Central Data Center in Cairo.

The objectives of Project Rakeeb are to: 1) evaluate to what extent the elections are fair and transparent in accordance with Egyptian law and international standards for democratic elections; and 2) enhance citizen participation in the political process. After each round of elections, Project Rakeeb is issuing statements on the quality of the voting process. At the end of all three rounds, Project Rakeeb will issue a final statement about the overall quality of the People's Assembly election process.

Summary of Findings

The first round of voting in Egypt's People's Assembly Elections was a meaningful democratic exercise. Despite concerns of possible violence due to political unrest in the days leading up to the elections, both election days were largely peaceful with relatively few reports of violence or intimidation. The main challenges in the process were weak and inconsistent election administration, active campaigning by political parties at polling locations, and the denial of access of accredited observers to the process.

The first day of voting was marked by long queues of voters throughout the day, reflecting a strong desire of the Egyptian people to exercise their fundamental democratic rights via the democratic process. The voting process was slow as many polling officials were seemingly confused on how to administer the process, in part due to the lack of clarity in election procedures from the Higher Election Commission (HEC) and in part due to the lack of training of polling officials prior to Election Days. The second day of voting was marked by smaller queues and a more rapid and orderly voting process, in part due to more manageable numbers of voters at the polling stations.

Early on the first day, weak election administration threatened the process as more than one-third of polling stations where Rakeeb observers were deployed opened more than an hour late due to the late

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arrival of election materials, including ballot papers, ballot boxes, indelible ink and voters' lists. Positively, voters demonstrated patience as election officials worked quickly to remedy the problems. The decision to extend voting until 9 PM was a positive measure, although in many cases judicial supervisors were not informed of the extension and did not make provisions to extend voting hours.

In terms of the election administration, Project Rakeeb was able to produce a statistical analysis of the overall trends in the process based on reports sent by observers deployed to a random and representative sample of polling stations. Based on gathered data from its observers on the first and second days of voting, Project Rakeeb is able to report on the following:

Opening Time	Day 1	Day 2
Before 9 AM	65%	95%
Between 9 and 11 AM	23%	5%
After 11 AM	12%	0%

Findings	Day 1	Day 2
Ballot Boxes Locked / Sealed	91%	92%
Presence of Indelible Ink	96%	97%
Security Personnel Inside Stations	23%	31%
Avg. # of Party / Candidate Agents	3-4	3-4

Findings	Day 1	Day 2
Percent of Polling Stations Where Observers Reported Some Individuals Not Found on Voters' List	39%	42%
Percent of Polling Stations Where Observers Reported Some Individuals Permitted to Vote Without ID	13%	14%
Percent of Polling Stations Where Observers Reported Polling Officials Sometimes Did Not Make Tick Next to Voters' Names	23%	16%
Percent of Polling Stations Where Observers Reported Polling Officials Sometimes Issued Unstamped Ballot Papers to Voters	16%	14%
Percent of Polling Stations Where Observers Reported Voters Not Able to Mark Ballots in Secrecy	17%	12%
Percent of Polling Stations Where Observers Reported Polling Officials Did Not Put Ink on Fingers of Some Voters After Voting	25%	32%
Percent of Polling Stations Where Observers Reported Voters Did Not Sign or Ink Next to Their Names After Voting	3%	6%

Closing Time	Day 1	Day 2
Before 7 PM	3%	3%
At 7 PM / Between 7 and 8 PM	29%	87%
After 8 PM	68%	10%

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Based on the statistical analysis, the following challenges can be noted on both days:

- In some polling stations, ballot boxes were not locked / sealed, increasing the potential for vote tampering;
- In many polling stations, security personnel were present inside of polling stations without due cause, possibly increasing the potential for voter intimidation;
- In many polling stations, some individuals were not found on the voters' list, either because they were uncertain of their polling locations or because voters' list contained errors;
- In some polling stations, not all ballots issued to voters were not stamped or signed on the back signifying their validity, increasing the potential that such votes will be considered invalid, which is illegal;
- In some polling stations, voters were unable to mark their ballots in secrecy, increasing the potential for voter intimidation;
- In many polling stations, polling officials did not ink the fingers of voters (sometimes due to the lack of presence of ink), increasing the potential for voter fraud and multiple voting; and
- In some polling stations, polling officials did not properly mark voters' lists to note an individual had been permitted to vote or ensure that voters' inked / signed next to their names after they voted, increasing the potential for confusion in the ballot reconciliation and voter fraud.

In addition to challenges in election administration, active political campaigning by political parties – most notably Freedom & Justice – was found to hamper the process on both election days. On the first day of voting, Rakeeb observers reported 71 separate incidents of active political campaigning at polling centers; on the second day, observers reported 51 incidents. While the majority of reports implicated Freedom & Justice, there were also reports of campaigning by Nour Party and the Egyptian Bloc. Observers also reported 30 cases of party members using religious slogans to influence voters at polling stations. Regrettably, polling officials rarely prevented such campaigning in and around polling locations.

Another concerning trend noted on both election days was the denial or expulsion of accredited election observers from polling stations. Despite having HEC accreditation, 19 percent of Rakeeb observers deployed on the first day of voting were denied access or expelled from polling stations by judicial supervisors; on the second day, approximately 5 percent were denied or expelled. In two cases, Rakeeb observers were physically assaulted in the process of being expelled from polling stations. The denial of access to observers is a serious violation to both the HEC Code of Conduct and international principles for elections, undermining the credibility of the electoral process.

As mentioned earlier, both election days were relatively few incidents of violence or intimidation however there were a large number of critical incidents, specifically:

- 86 incidents of Rakeeb observers denied access or expelled from polling stations;
- 71 incidents of active campaigning by political contestants in and around polling centers, most often by Freedom & Justice Party;
- 30 incidents of political party representatives using religious slogans to influence voters;
- 15 incidents of vote buying;
- 11 incidents of party or candidate agents being expelled from polling stations;
- 8 incidents of sexual harassment against women; and
- 3 incidents of circular voting.

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Finally, as the election process moves forward, Project Rakeeb calls upon the HEC to:

- Ensure that observers who have been accredited by the HEC are guaranteed access to follow up on the voting process in polling stations and the counting process in counting centers in accordance with the Code of Conduct, international election standards and regulations of the HEC itself;
- Ensure the consistent application of official election procedures by judicial supervisors and polling officials to reduce confusion and errors at polling stations;
- Ensure better lines of communications between HEC and judicial supervisors to ensure changes regarding election policies and procedures are communicated to polling officials;
- Ensure that security officials are only temporarily permitted to be present inside polling stations until order is restored in accordance with the law; and
- Use its authority to prevent active campaigning by political parties in and around polling locations.

Project Rakeeb also calls upon all political parties to refrain from active political campaigning, particularly inside polling stations and centers, on Election Days in accordance with Egyptian law.

Project Rakeeb commends Egyptian voters on their participation and patience during the first and second days of the first round of elections for the People's Assembly. We hope that all political parties, contestants, and citizens will participate calmly and responsibly in the coming rounds of elections.