



## People's Assembly Elections – Second Round

### *Final Statement*

December 18, 2011

#### **Project Rakeeb finds voting largely peaceful, but significant challenges at counting centers *Denial of access to accredited observers from polling stations and counting centers of serious concern***

Project Rakeeb is joint collaboration between two Egyptian civil society organizations – the Egyptian Association for Community Participation Enhancement (EACPE) and the Egyptian Association for Dissemination and Development 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. In the second round of the People's Assembly Elections, Project Rakeeb deployed 471 non-partisan citizen observers in all nine governorates where elections took place. Rakeeb observers were deployed to a statistically-sound, random and representative sample of polling stations and 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**

Rakeeb observers reported that the second round of voting in Egypt's People's Assembly Elections was a meaningful democratic exercise. The voting process was largely peaceful on both election days with relatively few reports of violence or intimidation. The main challenges were inadequate logistical provisions at counting centers, continued active political campaigning by a wide range of political contests at polling centers, and the continued denial of access to accredited observers to the process.

Although voting was largely smooth, tensions escalated in some locations around the closing of polls on both days. The vast majority of polling stations closed on time or slightly after to accommodate voters in queue at 7 PM. However, observers in some locations reported that polling stations closed at 7 PM with voters still in queue. In a few cases, pressure from disenfranchised voters prompted judicial supervisors to reopen the polling stations, notably at multiple locations in Giza.

Project Rakeeb found that most problematic aspects of the electoral process are related to the poll closing and counting process; this is largely due to the fact that ballots are counted at counting centers

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instead of polling stations. Of concern, poor logistical management and inadequate space at counting centers prompted security personnel to delay or deny access to polling officials, political party and candidate agents and accredited election observers. In some cases, this action resulted in confrontations between judicial supervisors and security officials and delayed the counting process, notably in Giza and Sharqiya. In many cases, Rakeeb observers reported that party agents and election observers were denied access or expelled from counting centers by security personnel due to overcrowding. In addition, the long distance between many polling centers and the counting center increased the vulnerability of the ballot boxes transported overnight and delayed the counting process.

As part of a continuing negative trend, Rakeeb observers were denied access or expelled from polling stations by judicial supervisors – and, in some cases, security officials - despite having received accreditation from the Supreme Judicial Committee for Elections (SJCE). Project Rakeeb is seriously concerned by SJCE treatment of accredited observers and its failure to address the problem, which violates SJCE regulations, National Council for Human Rights Code of Conduct, and international election standards for credible elections.

As part of another negative trend, active political campaigning by political contestants remains widespread. While the number of reported incidents was fewer on the second day of voting than on the first day, Rakeeb observers reported active campaigning by a wide range of political contestants on both days, including Freedom and Justice Party, Nour Party, the Egyptian Bloc, Wafd Party, Reform and Development, the Egypt Nationalist Party, and many independent candidates, often identified as former members of the National Democratic Party.

While it is acknowledged that security personnel were instructed to prevent active political campaigning by political contestants, Observers reported that efforts were undertaken by security officials in some locations however prevention efforts were not fully implemented uniformly nationwide. Project Rakeeb hopes that the SJCE and security personnel will exercise their authority and ensure that consistent and appropriate action is taken to prevent this illegal practice going forward.

On both days, Project Rakeeb was able to collect data from 97 percent of observers who reported on the voting process and closing of polling stations. On both days, Rakeeb observers reported that the vast majority of polling stations opened prior to 9 AM. However, on the first day of voting, a few polling stations opened late due to the late arrival of polling officials or sensitive materials, including ballots, voters' lists, and indelible ink. On the second day, a few polling stations opened late primarily due to the late arrival of polling officials. Below is a breakdown of the opening times on both days:

Opening Time	Percentage Day 1	Percentage Day 2
Before 9 AM	91%	96%
Between 9 and 11 AM	9%	4%
After 11 AM	>0% <sup>1</sup>	0%

While voting was largely calm and orderly, Project Rakeeb found some procedural inconsistencies where observers were deployed. Below is a breakdown of findings on the setup and voting processes:

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<sup>1</sup> Observers reported one incident of a polling station opening after 11 AM in Giza.

Findings	Percentage Day 1	Percentage Day 2
Ballot Boxes Locked / Sealed	82%	88%
Presence of Indelible Ink	99%	98%
Security Personnel Inside Stations	38%	33%
Avg. # of Party / Candidate Agents	3-4	3-4

Findings	Percentage Day 1	Percentage Day 2
Percent of Polling Stations Where Observers Reported Some Individuals Not Found on Voters' List	47%	40%
Percent of Polling Stations Where Observers Reported Some Individuals Permitted to Vote Without ID	11%	9%
Percent of Polling Stations Where Observers Reported Polling Officials Sometimes Did Not Make Tick Next to Voters' Names	16%	12%
Percent of Polling Stations Where Observers Reported Polling Officials Sometimes Issued Unstamped Ballot Papers to Voters	6%	5%
Percent of Polling Stations Where Observers Reported Voters Not Able to Mark Ballots in Secrecy	18%	17%
Percent of Polling Stations Where Observers Reported Polling Officials Did Not Put Ink on Fingers of Some Voters After Voting	19%	21%
Percent of Polling Stations Where Observers Reported Voters Did Not Sign / Ink Next to Their Name After Voting	3%	1%

Rakeeb observers generally reported that the voting process was more rapid and orderly on the second day of voting. However, as noted in the statistical indicators above, HEC officials continue to apply inconsistent practices for election administration due to the lack of clarity of the HEC procedures. Based on the statistical analysis, the following challenges can be noted on both days:

- In some polling stations, ballot boxes were not locked or 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 a few 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;
- In some polling stations, voters were unable to mark their ballots in secrecy, increasing the potential for voter intimidation;
- In some 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
- In a few 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.

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On both days of voting, Rakeeb observers noted that in some locations polling stations closed at 7 PM with voters still in queue. On the first day of voting, where polling stations opened late, the SJCE announced the extension of voting until 9 PM in those locations. Below is a breakdown of closing times:

Closing Time	Percentage Day 1	Percentage Day 2
Before 7 PM	6%	8%
Between 7 and 8 PM	78%	90%
After 8 PM	16%	2%

As mentioned earlier, both election days were relatively free of incidents of violence or intimidation however there were a large number of some critical incidents reported over the two-day period:

- 62 Rakeeb observers have either been denied access or expelled from polling stations;
- 112 incidents of active campaigning by political contestants in and around polling stations;
- 60 incidents of the presence of campaign materials inside polling stations, often of Freedom and Justice Party, Nour Party and independent candidates;
- 19 incidents of political party representatives using religious slogans to influence voters;
- 11 incidents of political party or candidate agents being expelled from polling stations;
- 4 incidents of vote buying;
- 2 incidents of circular voting; and
- 19 incidents of violence, including two cases of physical conflict between political parties in Giza – one involving Freedom and Justice and Egyptian Bloc, another involving Nour and Egyptian Bloc – and one physical conflict between Freedom and Justice and Nour in Menoufiya.

Project Rakeeb reiterates its request to the SJCE to uphold its commitment to rectify recurring mistakes. Specifically, Project Rakeeb requests that the SJCE:

- Consider undertaking the counting process in polling stations beginning with the runoff for the second round to avoid the deficiencies and errors that have marred the first and second rounds as a result of transporting ballot boxes before counting them;
- Ensure that observers who have been accredited by the SJCE are guaranteed access to polling stations in accordance with the Code of Conduct, international election standards and regulations of the SJCE itself;
- Use its authority to prevent campaigning in and around polling centers and ensure that the period of campaign silence is upheld in accordance with the law;
- Ensure that security officials are acting in accordance with the law and not interfering in the work of the SJCE; and
- Ensure the consistent application of official election procedures by judicial supervisors and polling officials to reduce confusion and errors at polling stations.

Project Rakeeb also calls upon all political parties to refrain from active political campaigning and cease use of religious slogans in accordance with Egyptian law.

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