



Preliminary Election Report

2018 Parliamentary Election

Nov 2018



Free and Fair Election Forum of Afghanistan

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Executive Summary

After years of delay, the third parliamentary elections were held on 20th of October, 2018. These elections were of utmost important from legal and political perspectives as well as social and economic dimensions. The expiration of the legal mandate and period of the previous parliament for 3 years due to the delay in elections challenged the democracy and the rule of law. Hence, the holding of these elections provided an opportunity to the Afghans to choose who they want to be their representatives in the democratic intuitions.

The Free and Fair Election Forum of Afghanistan (FEFA) has developed and implemented a direct monitoring process for the electoral process designed to help the transparency, freedom and justice in the electoral process, in order to maintain maximum level of accuracy and credibility. The FEFA monitored the electoral process in one to three polling stations in each polling centers throughout the country. FEFA observers used an observation checklist to collect information about the centers, the beginning, and process, the end of the voting, observance of regulations and other topics, which contains more than one hundred and thirty relevant and appropriate questions. However, due to the prompt importance of some issues, FEFA categorized 26 event types of incidents as the most important and most influential cases, and received reports of their occurrence on a regular basis and in three stages on the Election Day from all the provinces with the exception of Ghazni of the country. The general managerial and logistical status, the accuracy of the commission's performance during the collection of votes, the prevention of illegal voting, the time opening and closing of the polling centers, the transparency of the process, and the possibility of observation are the most important indicators used by FEFA observers. The urgent and high-profile findings at polling hours were regularly shared with the election commission officials so the necessary steps to be taken.

Introduction

The Free & Fair Election Forum of Afghanistan (FEFA), established in 2004, is the largest election observer organization in Afghanistan. FEFA promotes comprehensive implementation of domestic laws, promotes transparency in the electoral processes, works to strengthen electoral mechanisms, monitors the activities of parliament, encourages participation by women and youth in political, social and cultural processes, focuses on implementation of democratic reforms in the country, conducts academic research, prints and publishes investigative reports and monitors findings. FEFA is an impartial institution that works through partnerships and citizen participation to foster good governance and professional programs that enhance accountability in democratic processes.

Elections: FEFA is the domestic organization which has widened electoral programs and effectively implemented them through its relationships with electoral commissions and stakeholders. FEFA directly monitors the performance of these commissions and provides technical and informational assistance. FEFA shares its findings from monitoring electoral commissions and provincial offices with the public, along with recommendations and proposals to strengthen the capacity of those commissions and promote skilled management. FEFA also devises and implements advocacy programs to break through barriers to participation in the electoral process.

The National Assembly: FEFA also monitors the actions and performance of both houses of the national assembly of Afghanistan, and regularly reports on its activities. FEFA provides weekly, monthly, and annual reports to both the public and members of the assembly. At the same time, FEFA helps build relationships between members of parliament and their constituents by hosting town halls to create opportunities for citizens to share their problems and opinions face-to-face with their representatives.

Women & Youth: FEFA helps to increase the participation and power of women and youth in politics, society, and culture by holding educational seminars and meetings, and by advocacy for their concerns and priorities. FEFA strives to help women work together to increase the power of their voice in society. FEFA identifies and introduces successful young people each year, inspiring youth to achieve goals, take advantage of opportunities, and break down barriers. FEFA has identified 31 successful young figures over the past 3 years and made sure their voices were heard by society.

Research: FEFA conducts credible academic research and publishes findings with detailed statistics and analyses. Such research enriches and strengthens our efforts to have a positive influence on Afghanistan's national institutions.

FEFA has comprehensively covered national elections by deploying nearly 33,000 male and female observers, and regularly shared its observations and findings with the public, in hopes of institutionalizing transparency in government. It created and led a network of 25 active civic groups to promote transparency and accountable governance. Additionally, FEFA has developed deep experience by observing elections in Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh. This experience makes FEFA the premier election observation organization in Afghanistan. More than 500 male and female staffs and volunteers work together throughout 34 provinces of Afghanistan to implement FEFA's programs in cooperation with local partner.

Methodology

The method of collecting data used in this process consists of quantitative and qualitative approaches. The main instrument for this research was developing a checklist that included more than 130 questions regarding the voting process. Our observers filled the questionnaires and recorded the data on papers. The data was sent to FEFA headquarters where it was upload to the database which was specifically developed for this purpose by the technical team at FEFA. The checklist consisted of three forms. The first form is comprised of a complete set of questions focusing on the three stages of opening, voting and closing of polling stations on the Election Day. The second form was about the categorization of critical incidents which have been made available in encoded manner to provincial authorities and trainers, and the third form was used to receive and record emergency incidents at the call center. Provincial authorities, of course, had access to the same form of gathering and monopolizing the reported cases from officials under their supervision. These arrangements allowed for accurate recording of incidents, behaviors and situations. In addition, the FEFA, dedicated a call center, which consisted of about 50 temporary agents, on election days to receive short and prompt reports from provincial authorities. The same mechanism was used to cover the election in Kandahar province, which was held a week later on the 27th of October, but with fewer staff members. The coverage area of the call center was all the 33 provinces where the elections were held with the exception of Ghazni. Immediate reports are rechecked once they are registered in the database to ensure its accuracy.

Findings and Analysis

This paper contains findings from the analysis of the emergency and other reports of the election days. These findings are tailored to the type of event and are categorized into 26 groups. But according to the requirement for the structure of the report, only those cases that are significant in terms of importance and effectiveness have been outlined here. The structure of this report is descriptive and is free of details and case statistics. The list of cases are differentiated by province, district, polling station, time of occurrence and other details listed in the table attached to the report. Lack or defect of biometric equipment, delay in the opening of polling centers, lack of or defect in the voter list, the existence of a security threat, lack of voting materials, the absence of IEC staff at the designated time, the presence and intervention of irresponsible person(s) in the duties of the commission, the existence of Election campaign materials at or near the polling center, underage voting, group voting, continuation of election campaigns on the election day, prevention of observation, voting more than once, and violating the principle of impartiality by Commission staff are reported to be the most common problems that occurred during the election day. As discussed in the methodology section, prior to the implementation of the monitoring, a precise mechanism was developed to maintain the credibility of reports. Identification of the time of incident and type of observation is part of the necessary indicators for tracking and maintaining data validity.

A. Type and Number of Incidents

The incidences that were recorded incidents on the day of election can be divided into 5 types. The first category of incidents are related to the polling station. Indicators such as the presence of publicity in the polling centers and near them, the polling center's security or potential threat, the prevention or the possibility of observation and the presence of irresponsible person(s) are recorded and investigated through this type. The second group of incidents relates to time and opening of polling centers. In this category, questions have been asked about the time of opening, absence or presence of commission staff, the availability of voting materials, and the existence and functionality of biometric devices. The third category of incidents is related to the voting process, and reviews issues such as the careful checking of voter identity documents, finger inks, illegal voting such as repeated voting, proxy, underage and group voting. The fourth step of observation is related to the closure of polling stations. At this point, issues such as opening time and adhering the rules, such as sealing ballot boxes after the end of voting and the registration of remaining papers, are reviewed. The fifth and final type of incidents are related to the location of the votes counting, the presence of unauthorized people, and the distribution and installation of a copy of the result form has been recorded (Table 1 below).

Breakdown of Incidents by Type	Number	Percentage
Incidents related Polling centers	320	27.8
Incidents related Polling centers and observer	535	46.4
Incidents related to voting process	188	16.3
Incident related to closure of Polling Centers	83	7.2
Incidents related to vote count and results announcement	26	2.3
Total	1152	100

B. Type of Observation

Reports recorded by FEFA observers are categorized into three categories in terms of type of observation. More than 90% of the reports are the result of direct observation by observers in polling centers and polling stations. About 8% of cases have been reported by other sources to FEFA observers. In less than 1% of cases, FEFA observers have arrived in the area after the incident, but have seen its effects and consequences (Table 2 below).

Observation Type	Number	Percentage
I Witnessed for myself	1047	90.9
I was told about the incident	96	8.3
I arrived to polling center after the incident took place	9	0.8
Total	1152	100

Major Findings

After going through the reports from our observers, FEFA came across the following important elements that had a significant impact on the voting process.

1. Problems With The Biometric Devices

According to the plans of IEC, all the polling stations were supposed to have a biometric device and the devices were to work properly. Unfortunately, in many polling stations and centers under FEFA's surveillance, biometric devices were not delivered to the polling stations in time. In some cases they were either out of order or broke down during operation. As a result, the commission has not been able to use the biometric device to record voters' bio-data and identity for various reasons. The main problems with the biometric machines as reported by our observers included the break down and failure of the biometric device, the battery ran out of charge, staff's inability to use biometric device, intentional avoidance of using the devices by IEC staff, miss-delivery of the devices of one center to other center, the failure of the bio metric device printer or the lack of printing paper, and the ballots casted fraudulently and without using biometrics device in the absence of voters' by candidates or other individuals. These were the most common problems on the first and second day of the election, which has been registered and reported by FEFA observers. The lack of use or improper use of the biometric device due to its high importance in the electoral process can undermine the transparency of voting in many centers and thus undermine the credibility of the election throughout the country. This problem alone accounts for over 15% of the problems reported by FEFA observers.

2. Delay In The Opening Of Polling Stations

It is very important that the number of voters in each center and the average completion time of the voting of an individual are taken into account while planning the timeframe for opening and closing of polling stations. Failure to realize that, means the change in the operational plan, the deprivation of a number of citizens from the right to vote, the reduction of operational efficiency and the dissatisfaction of the people. In most polling stations, citizens were already behind the gates of the polling centers even before 7 o'clock, but only a handful of centers began to work at their appointed time.

The long delay in the opening of many polling centers, in addition to the voter's bother and dissatisfaction, have reduced the general optimism about the electoral process, reduced the number of voters and deprived a large number of voters. In many areas, the IEC staff came to the center or started work hours later than the appointed time. Despite the extension of polling day by the commission on the first day of voting, many polling stations were closed down in a number of constituencies, despite the long queues of voters and the remaining official time. However, in some areas, they did the opposite and left the centers opened until late hours. Although the commission extended voting hours for up to 8 o'clock in the evening to compensate for lost time, it action could not manage to compensate for this defect, as in most regions people were not able to keep waiting for the voting, due to increased cold, lack of security in the polling station, lack of light and other factors, and as a result of a mass of people, despite standing in the queue for hours, they could not

benefit from their political right to determine their own destiny. Delay in opening the station accounts for 13% of the all the problems.

3. Issues With The Voters' List

The preparation and use of voters' lists in the elections was one of the main demands of the observatory organizations, political parties and civil society institutions. Voter registration and cataloging the voter's lists took several months. It was expected that in the parliamentary elections of 2018, the issue of illegal voting would be significantly reduced. This was because plenty of time and resources were used at the registration stage to register and list voters as a filter to prevent fraud. IEC also promised political parties observatory institutions to install a full list of voters before election in polling stations and to fully use them on the Election Day. However, unfortunately, in many centers, the voters' lists did not exist or were incomplete. The name of voters were based on alphabetical order, and there were no names in certain centers that began with certain letters. In a number of other centers, the voter list was mistakenly sent to other centers. The behavior of the IEC staff was different in dealing with such a situation; in a number of polling centers, the names of individuals were included in a separate list with the registration label, and in some centers such persons could not vote. The second list used for voting was pre-prepared as a table, but in others, only plain white papers were used to register voters. The lack of or defect in the list of votes not only deprived the citizens from their civil right, but provided grounds for fraud and out-of-quota voting. This problem accounts for nearly 9% of all reported incidents in terms of volume.

4. Security Threats

In spite of the honest dedications of the country's security forces, security threats in a number of polling stations and centers hindered or disrupted the electoral process. Terrorist groups had warned citizens about the consequences of being involved in democratic processes before the election. Disturbing the voter registration process, limiting the candidates' campaign and publicity opportunities, and attacking citizens and polling centers and killing citizens on Election Day were main tactics employed by these groups' efforts to suppress democracy in the country. These threats coupled with the management and operational weaknesses of the Independent Election Commission (IEC) presented great challenges of holding inclusive, free and fair elections. The firm and resolute determination of citizens to participate in the elections and the exercise of their political right were the things that made the elections possible to be held. However, in some cases, security incidents caused the polling station to be closed by the election commission and the voting process would end earlier than the designated time. In some provinces and districts, high security threats have had a negative impact on voters' political participation and in a number of areas due to the state of emergency the IEC failed to hold elections. Security threats account for nearly 7% of all reported incidents on Election Day.

5. Shortage Of Electoral Materials

In addition to the lack or defect of the biometric system or the delay in opening the polling stations, most centers faced with a lack of one or more electoral materials. In a number of polling stations,

no part of the material had arrived before the early hours of the morning, resulting in closure of polling centers. One of the main factors that ultimately forced the commission to announce the extension of polling hours and adding the second day of election was material shortages, and closure of the centers. The lack of materials has been observed in the absolute majority of provinces. The biometrics, the voter list, the journal, the markers and the ballots were the most important materials that many centers have been affected due to lack of them. The lack of materials was limited to distant provinces and difficult to reach districts; dozens of polling centers in Kabul remained closed for several hours at the lowest geographical distance without any physical or security barriers, or did not open at all.

Miss-delivery of materials was another common phenomenon that caused the process of voting to be disturbed. It was expected that the commission consider delivering the necessary materials for the constituencies, based on the information gathered in voters' registration stage, but what was seen was the complete failure of the election commission's logistical and operational system. The issue could be theoretically and operationally resolved easily, but the Commission refused the precise planning with extreme optimism and simplicity and failed to complete the process of transferring materials even before the early hours of Election Day. The lack of materials does not necessarily mean all the items, but the lack of just one of the materials in most centers dragged the whole process to a shut down. Out of the 26 categories of violations, offenses and electoral fraud that are on the FEFA oversight list, close to 7 percent of it has been the lack of voting materials. Of course, the problem of the defect of the biometric system and the absence or defect of the voters' list is not contained here in this title and was placed in a separate category because of the importance and prevalence.

6. Absence Of IEC Staff At The Designated Time

According to the IEC, each polling center should have 5 employees: 1) responsible for controlling the voter's queue; 2) responsible for identity and biometrics; 3) responsible for distributing the ballots and finger ink; 4) responsible for the ballot boxes; and 5) supervisor of the PC. The lack of any of these individuals would mean the disruption of voting process because given the number of voters in each center, the voting process should not be stopped or stricken, otherwise in many voters are deprived of voting to or at least adds to length of a queue and would create dissatisfaction and grievances to the public.

Unfortunately, more than 6% of the events reported by FEFA observers indicate multi-hours absence of commission staff. In a number of polling centers, at least one of the abovementioned persons has not reached the center at the specified time. According to reports, the absence of a polling station employee often results in irregularities, longer waiting of voters, mismanagement of affairs (in particular voter identity check and biometrics), temporary closure of polling stations and instigating interventions of unauthorized individuals. In addition to staff absenteeism, the weakness of their executive capacity was another obstacle before the electoral process. For example, dozens of reports indicate that the IEC staff did not consider the use of the biometric device. Some of them even had difficulty finding names on the voters' list. In addition to general issues such as security and logistical problems, part of the deficiencies of the Election Day was

the consequence of the disability of the Commission staff. Only lack of technical ability is not the problem, but a number of them lacked moral commitment and motivation to fulfill this great national responsibility.

7. Presence And Intervention Of Unauthorized Personnel

The principle of non-interference of unauthorized personal is the most important element for the integrity of the election. Conscious participation, free competition and free election are meaningful when there is no unlawful involvement in the electoral process, and no one other than the voter him/herself can use his/her vote. Unauthorized individuals include all groups, with the exception of the Independent Election Commission and the Electoral Complaints Commission; however, the scope of action of the Complaints Commission is limited on Election Day. The main elements included in this category include government officials, candidates, local influencers and powerbrokers, their supporters and observer entities. The staff of the commissions are also limited to the competences specified in the electoral law regulations and are bound to comply with the principle of impartiality.

FEFA observers' direct observations indicate that in some polling centers, local influences and irresponsible gunmen have threatened the voters telling them to vote for a specific candidate. In a number of centers, the distribution of money on Election Day is in favor of a particular candidate has been observed. Contrary to the principle of competition and free election, a number of citizens have been voting, affected by the influence and threat of certain groups or have been deprived of their right to vote. In some centers, unarmed people have clearly made citizens to vote for a particular person. Although the presence of people may not be able to change the results of the vote or violate the democratic norms, it is likely to be a factor in infiltration or facilitate intervention. Unfortunately, in some cases, the background to the Commission staff was the mainstay of this violation.

8. Existence Of Electoral Campaign Materials In Polling Stations Or Close To Them

The campaign ended on the morning of the 18th of October. According to the law, the presence of publicity materials in the distance of 100 meters of the polling center or the continuation of campaigns on days of silence period and Election Day is prohibited. However, there were a lot of advertising activities near the centers and even within the polling centers. This rule focuses on healthy competition, giving citizens the opportunity to think and choose the right person, and maintain the integrity of the electoral process, and prevent intrusions and illegal interference with the electoral process. Unfortunately, this expectation was not fulfilled. This consists about 5% of emergency reports.

9. Underage Voting

In a number of polling centers, the number of underage voters was observed. Although specifying the voting age is not part of the IEC procedure, a number of people can clearly be identified as underage. Even in cases where under-age person(s) has been identified IEC staff has not prevented them from voting. Of course, this issue was neglected by the IEC and the Civil Population Registration Office at the registration stage. A huge amount of new Tazkeras were used for registration of voters. In many cases, candidates attempted to illegally send underage person(s) for

registration and imposed them on the list by influence, threatening or subornation of their employees. However, on the Election Day, the commission did not take any measures to prevent these individuals from voting. The argument of the IEC staff has been that their benchmark is the voter list, and these people should be filtered out in the earlier stages. Although the commission had enough time to clean up the list before the election and cast many people out of the voters' list, thousands of underage people voted with tagged Tazkeras. Since the number of such events has been low (only 49 cases in the PCs under FEFA observation), there is no serious concern about changing the results of the votes.

10. Group Voting

According to the voting procedure, the group voting is part of the electoral infractions. Although the group vote is not a direct fraud, it affects individuals' free choice and decision making. This issue, in addition to personal consequences for voters, can provide grounds for illegal campaigning, infiltration and disorder. Unfortunately, this phenomenon has also been observed in a number of polling stations. The number of such incidents is negligible and only 49 cases out of more than 1152 cases are registered.

11. Campaigns On Election Day

In addition to publicity material within or near the polling center, obvious and hidden campaigns continued on Election Day in many polling stations. This publicity was sometimes conducted within the centers, and individuals affiliated to the candidates were campaigning in favor of certain candidate without any effective barriers by the Commission staff. This implies a clear violation of the law and questions the fairness, justice and electoral freedom. According to reports, especially in areas where there were fewer observers or areas under influence of powerbrokers, active campaigns of candidates has been going on in direct presence of themselves their campaign team members and their observers. Distribution of promotional brochures, direct conversations with voters and distribution of candidates' photos were part of these campaign.

12. Voting After Official Time

The goal to determine the hours of voting is to regulate the process, to ensure the transparency of the process, the integrity of the election, and the maintenance of inclusive right of voting. However, in many cases, it has been observed that voting has continued beyond specified time. Since the delay in the opening of the centers led to an extension of the working hours, a number of citizens were able to enjoy the right to vote during additional hours, but unlike the norms in a number of PCs on the first day and the second day, people were not able to vote after the end of the official time. Since this opportunity has not been available to all, this is a violation of fairness and dualism with individuals and candidates. In the simplest analysis, this can change the balance of votes in favor of some candidates because they do not necessarily have the supporters of all the candidates in all the districts. More importantly, this violation can provide grounds for fraud and corruption. At the end of the day, and when observers and the public are not involved in preventing fraud, a number of people can specially engineer the votes with the collusion and cooperation of the Commission staff. It can even be assumed that the staff of the commission illegally extended the

polling hours in some PCs because of the affiliation or influence of a particular candidate in order to provide the way polling in favor of a particular person. In addition, since the process of vote counting and registering the results is supposed to begin immediately after the end of the voting process, post-official time voting is clearly contradictory to the procedure and can disrupt the post-voting stages of the process. It's natural that not everyone can stay in extreme cold weather, insecure areas, away from family members or (in some cases of women) without a guardian until midnight. Continuing the ballots after the appointed time, in addition to the possibility of orienting the votes in favor of the individual or certain individuals, can provide grounds for privacy and the plunder of the people's votes.

13. Observation Prevention

The monitoring of election by civilian observer organizations, political parties and candidate observers is the main mechanism for preventing corruption and fraud in the electoral process. For this reason, according to the Election law, the Commission is required to provide grounds for the presence of observers in polling stations. This includes training commission staff on the role of observers and their authority, co-ordination with security forces to avoid interference and respect for the role of observers and facilitate their presence at polling centers and stations. Unfortunately, in many cases, security forces or Commission staff prevented the presence of FEFA observers and other civil society organizations, political groups and candidates observes. This is a clear violation of the law and a factor in increasing the likelihood of fraud.

In some polling centers, observers were expelled from the polling stations by force and with grievance. This has been a prevention has occurred both during the voting and in the ballot count. In a number of cases observers and monitors have been told that the ballot box will be open and votes will be counted on the second day, but an hour after the departure of observers from the PCs, votes have been counted. This indicates the lack of proper communication to the security authorities and the lack of training of the commission staff. In a more pessimistic way, it can be assumed that a number of local authority officials or regular employees consider observers to be a barrier to their personal, profitable, and fraudulent engagement. Perhaps for this reason, a number of polling center officials (sometimes with the help of individuals affiliated to some of the candidates) did not allow observers to monitor the process during the polling period or during certain hours throughout the day. Although this phenomenon is not numerous in number, but the nature of the offense is as such, that would pave the ground for widespread corruption and fraud in the elections. For this reason, its consequences can be more strenuous than other factors.

14. Repeated Voting

The principle of one person one vote, means that everyone has equal opportunity to vote. The integrity of the election results requires the equal exercise of the will of the citizens. Repeated voting opportunities violate the philosophy of justice and electoral equality. The outbreak of this phenomenon can affect the outcomes of the votes and will make the election run contrary to the

will of the people. Since, in the voter registration period, there were a lot of shortcomings and violations, and people were able to register multiple times with fake Tazkeras, the frequency of repeated voting was predictable.

Such people who are most likely to be affiliated with the candidates sought to have the opportunity to vote repeatedly in one polling center or several centers, and unfortunately they were able to vote more than once on Election Day. This fraud was made possible by the fact that the identity cards (Tazkeras) of the people in a number of polling centers were not checked properly, the finger inks were erasable, or the commission staff under the influence of some of the candidates helped the fraud to take place. According to observers' reports, a number of people have been able to vote using the tag on the duplicate or fake Tazkeras, while the tag was declared explicitly invalid on the copy of the Tazkeras.

15. Violation Of The Principle Of Neutrality By The Commission Staff

Independent Election Commission staff, as implementers of law and election, play the most vital role in integrity of election. But unpleasant events of violation of the impartiality by the staff of the Commission have been observed and reported. Using a biometric device for a group brought by a particular candidate to the center and refusing to use it for other people, prioritizing particular individuals during voting, not paying attention to checking their Identity documents, and allowing individuals of Candidates to continue direct and indirect campaigning are examples of the violation of the principle of impartiality of the Commission staff, which has been observed in a number of stations. Some of the staff, have endangered the Commission's impartiality principle because of their family affiliation with a number of candidates.

The campaign of supervisors and staff of the polling centers in favor of a particular candidate, allowing freely a campaigning of candidates, waiving the misconduct of certain voters in favor of a particular candidate, disregarding the filling of ballot boxes, not displaying the contents of the box to observers before the start of voting, closing the polling center to facilitate fraud by certain individuals, encouraging people to vote for a particular person, obtaining votes from people who have not previously registered, allowing unauthorized individuals associated with a specific candidate, and prohibiting the entry and voting of people who were not willing to vote to a specific candidate, was another violation of the principle impartiality by the Commission staff. This function can invalidate all the votes of a center or station.

16. Other Incidents

Other events recorded on election days included these; not inking of voters' fingers, the possibility of erasing of the finger ink, the presence and intervention of unauthorized persons in the vote count process, not checking of the Tazkeras and the stickers by the commission staff, the voting After the designated time, the threatening and compulsion of the people to vote for a particular candidate, proxy voting, not installing and not distributing a copy of the results list, votes counting at a different location from the polling station, failing to register unused and spoiled ballots, and buying and selling of Voting on the election day and not sealing the ballot boxes at the end of the

voting process. Although some of these events can be considered as significant in terms of affects, these events represent as a whole 11% of the all reported incidence.

Table 3: Type and number of incidents (**Reports from 456 polling centers**)

Type of incident	Number	Percentage
Lack or Dysfunction of biometric devices	178	15.5
Delay in opening the Polling stations	156	13.5
Lack or violation of voters' list	101	8.8
Existence of security threats	78	6.8
Shortage of electoral materials	76	6.6
Absence of Commission staff in the designated time	75	6.5
presence and intervention of unauthorized individuals in the commission's tasks	71	6.2
Existence of campaign materials in 100 meters distance of PSs	56	4.9
Under age person(s) voting	49	4.3
Collective(Group) voting	49	4.3
Continuation of Campaigns in the election day	47	4.1
Prevention from observation	45	3.9
Voting more than more than once	24	2.1
Violation of the principle of impartiality by Commission staff	20	1.7
Not coloring of voters' fingers by commission staff	19	1.6
Possibility of the ink being erased from fingers	16	1.4
Presence and intervention of unauthorized people in the vote count process	16	1.4
Not checking the Identity and the voting stickers by Commission staff	16	1.4
Voting after official designated time	13	1.1
Threatening and compulsion of people to vote to particular candidates	12	1
Proxy Voting	10	0.9
Not installation and distribution of results list	8	0.7
Vote count in location other than the designated station	6	0.5
Failure to register the unused and spoiled ballots	5	0.4
Trading the votes on election day	4	0.3
Failure to seal the ballot boxes	2	0.2
Total	1152	100

Conclusion and Recommendations

Considering the findings of FEFA's oversight, parliamentary elections of October 20th 21st and 27th of 2018 were all in appearance and in the nature of beyond expectations of citizens, observer

bodies and candidates. Despite the three-year delay in holding this important national incident, the IEC failed to meet the criteria. However, FEFA's monitoring statistics only represent the status of the polling centers covered by this organization, but according to the large volume of the sample, the findings of this study can be generalized to other polling stations and centers. The Independent Election Commission (IEC) have faced serious constraints in both the technical and operational sectors and in the macro management sector of the process. Operational failures are the result of poor management and disability of the officials and executive staff of this entity, which unfortunately has cost a heavy burden on the country. The undermining of people's confidence in the effectiveness of democratic processes, the failure to insure the inclusive right to vote and the protection of freedom, justice and equality in elections has not only denied the political right to a large number of citizens of the country, but has subjected the whole integrity of the process to be questioned. Spending of millions of dollars, recruiting thousands of employees, and years of delay in holding elections did not give the people what they deserved.

Although it was announced that 22,000 biometric devices were purchased, many polling stations did not have any device or they were not used for various reasons. Many polling centers throughout the country faced with a shortage of electoral materials. While, the information obtained from the establishment of polling stations and the voter list allowed the Commission to prevent the occurrence of such disorders by carefully planning, allocating and transferring the necessary materials. The delay in opening the polling centers was so common that the commission was forced to add one more day to renew the election for the first time. The process of recruiting Commission officials has also been questioned, and the Commission should learn from it as a bitter experience in the future. Of course, these findings do not mean neglecting the work done by the commission; in most polling centers on the first day, elections were held and a number of incidents that could potentially hinder the holding of elections have been prevented. This is, of course, the result of the involvement of many governmental and non-governmental agencies. However, the commission, unlike its past promises, practically lost control of the process on Election Day. Therefore, there are many things the Commission can take serious, practical and honest steps to correct.

Accordingly, in line with the findings of the FEFA's observatory mission, the following recommendations are presented to the Independent Election Commission (IEC) in order to reduce a part of the adverse effects on these elections, and in the next elections, especially the presidential election next spring, so that these limitations and shortcomings are to be avoided.

1) Training and procurement of biometric device

It is necessary for the staff of the Commission to be trained how to use the biometric device. Part of the problems of not of using the biometric devices has been due to the weakness of the staff of the Commission. In addition, it is necessary that the devices to be tested before sending to the polling centers, and supplementary accessories such as chargers, printers, paper, etc. should to be provided.

2) Improving Logistics Status

Many polling centers suffered from the lack of materials on polling day. This is due to the logistical weaknesses and operational incapability of the Commission. For example, sending incorrect material packets of one province to another, defect in voters' list, and the lack of

materials proportionate to the number of voters previously registered at the same PCs indicates the IEC's inability to function. It is compulsory to take the necessary action to correct this situation.

3) Improvement of management and operation chamber

The Commission has opened a Special Operations chamber, for the Administration of Elections. However, it failed to respond to the needs of all polling centers. This indicates the inadequacy of measures and management weakness. Commissions' planning needs to be tailored in accordance to past experiences and realistic needs, not based on pure optimism and deeming issues simplistic. This requires a more accurate assessment of operational requirements. For example, in the recent election, the commission had announced the average voting time for an individual is 30 to 50 seconds, while the actual fact proved to be the opposite.

4) Reforming the recruitment process

It is necessary for the Commission to reconsider the recruitment mechanism for appointing more competent and committed individuals, devote more time to complete the recruitment process and facilitate the opportunity to monitor it. In the recent election period, many employees under influence of local power brokers or candidates were hired. Such people often lacked the necessary skills and literacy, but at various stages violated the Commission's impartiality principle.

5) Facilitating observation

National and local observer bodies, political party and candidate observers, and ordinary people can prevent the spread of fraud, misuse of official authority, and misconduct of the Commission's staff. A number of commission staff not only did not act properly, but also been absent on Election Day, have taken action in favor of certain candidates or did not perform their duties desirably. If the commission facilitates the monitoring of employee performance, the efficiency of the commission's staff and the transparency of the election will increase. Facilitating observation can be done by awareness raising of the staff of the commission, simplifying the process of issuing credentials, and removing the number of observers in the registration, Polling centers, Tally Centers and Auditing centers.

6) Training the staff and raising awareness of security forces about the importance of observation and authority of observers

One of the major violations of this round of elections was the prevention of the presence of observers at polling stations. In most cases, there have been commissioners or security officials who have prevented the presence of observers in polling centers and polling stations. In a number of cases, observers have not only been deprived of observation, but have been beaten up as well. In order to prevent this problem in the future, the Election Commission needs to train their staff, about the observers' role, their impotence and authorities, and the security officials should be informed through security agencies, and should be explicitly punished for preventing the observation of statutory observers.

7) Establish more contact and co-ordination with the law enforcement agencies

Violation of the principle of free participation, fair competition, and consciously and voluntary voting through illegal influence is one of the most common problems in the election. In order to prevent the infiltration of unauthorized persons, it is suggested for the Commission to establish closer coordination with the security agencies and other law enforcement agencies, and develop and implement more accurate and practical mechanisms for controlling the affairs. In addition, identify secure and insecure areas in cooperation with security agencies and identifying threats to terrorist threats is possible only through the cooperation of the election commission with the law enforcement agencies.

8) Serious action against violations and infractions

Numerous Violations, infractions and electoral offences have been observed during the election. The presence of campaign materials at polling stations or close to them, continuing publicity in silent period and in election days, prevention of observation, security threats, the presence of gunmen in polling stations, compelling people to vote for a specific candidate, and so on, are the instances requiring a serious action of Independent election commission. Strictly addressing these cases can reduce the grounds for the violation and ensure transparency of the process. Although some of the effects of the events cannot be eliminated, measures must be taken to a large extent to ensure transparency.

9) Increasing the authority of the provincial commissions

It seems that the centralization of the structure and management qualifications in Kabul undermined the executive process. In order to address technical and managerial issues, it is necessary to increase the level of, powers and operational facilities of provincial commissions. For example, the infrastructure of material protection, logistics and counting, and the announcement of initial results of votes could be places in the provinces, to prevent inflation and reduction the effectiveness of the process in the headquarters.

10) Re-definition of vote-validation mechanism

In order to prevent the waste of citizens' votes and fraud, the Commission should reconsider the vote-validation mechanism. Of course, this is mainly within the jurisdiction of the Electoral Complaints Commission (IECC), but the role of the election commission in drafting the main lines of the program should not be ignored. The Independent Election Commission can formulate and implement an explicit, clear and fair mechanism for assessing the validation of the vote, in coordination and consultation with the Electoral Complaints Commission, Part of the turmoil of the recent election was due to the difference in methods at different centers in the use or non-use of biometric devices, the voters' list and the secondary voters' list. In a number of polling centers, people voted without regard to the need for biometrics and some polling stations voting has been stopped. But after counting ballots, initially, the votes without biometrics have been declared invalid, but eventually a part of them were considered valid. Due to this problem, which is definitely the responsibility of the election commission, the right to vote of a large number of citizens has been spoiled. The opposite is also possible; a number

of invalid votes can be registered under such circumstances. As a result, there is no definitive index for determining the boundary of valid and invalid votes without biometric recordings at the moment. For dealing with other violations, shortcomings and errors, there must also be clear and free of dual interpretation mechanisms to prevent the spoiling of citizens' rights and to prevent fraud and spoliation of results.

11) Develop A Comprehensive Election Database

Absence of an accurate statistics from the population of the country, eligible people for voting, registered people in the country level and each province, has been the main factor for increasing election costs, delaying the election process, reducing the effectiveness of the commission's programs and plans Logistical problems. It is recommended that the Independent Election Commission (IEC), in cooperation with the Independent Directorate for Civil Population Registration, prepare a comprehensive and viable database for providing the population statistics, eligible individuals for voting, voters registered in the previous elections. The minimum benefit is to facilitate planning, estimate the costs and materials, determine the voter's age, and developing a more accurate voters 'list. The database can help prevent proxy voting, under-age voting, frequent voting and possibly other problems. This database should be continually updated and refined to reflect the latest population and voters' statistics.

12) Development of a precise mechanism to prevent proxy voting, repeated voting and under-age voting

Some of the most common problems of all previous elections, including, October 20th 21st 27th 2018 are, proxy-voting, repeated voting, and underage voting. The Commission can and should, establish and implement relevant and appropriate mechanisms to prevent such arbitrary votes in consultation and collaboration all related bodies.

13) The pathology of the process:

The inadequacies and inefficiencies that have challenged the election so far should not be ignored. It is necessary to use past failures and weaknesses to improve the situation. It is suggested that a special group should be created for the pathology and analysis of the election process in order to analyze and review the past experiences and change it to a meaningful awareness, and ultimately appropriate policy-making to done based on it.

14) Development of long-term and professional vision

Although the findings of the report relate to recent parliamentary elections. However, FEFA's general findings and other observatories and field experts indicate that the Independent Election Commission is engaging in a routine and lacks a long-term vision for system reform and capacity building and future vision. A number of decisions and plans of the commission are focused solely on elections, and it is necessary to repeat the same process and even unnecessary work for subsequent elections. It is while, most of the preparations and substructures can be strengthened to maximize the potential of the Commission's implementation and policy-making in the long run. By doing so, it is possible to organize the costs and activities of the commission in a way that is not only for one election but is beneficial

for future elections as well. Thus, it can be predicted that the Commission's ability with each election improves and next rounds of elections will face less problems. For example, registration and preparation of a voters' list, a comprehensive election database, the establishment of polling centers, recruitment of commission staff, the preparation of procedures and guidelines, technological and educational infrastructure, etc., can be managed with a long-term perspective, which does not require separate planning and preparations, cost and time in each election

15) Reviving Public confidence

The most important election impact is to revive citizens' confidence in democracy, the transfer of power and the efficiency of the electoral system. Unfortunately, public confidence and the collective trust of citizens towards democratic processes and the ability and commitment of the electoral commissions have been seriously damaged. It is recommended that the IEC, in addition to the implementation of the above mentioned recommendations, take a medium-term and long-term program to revive people's confidence. In addition to developing democracy, this can reduce the effects of disabilities and maladministration, and restore the credibility of the Commission.