



United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI)
بعثة الأمم المتحدة لمساعدة العراق (يونامي)

Iraq's Electoral Preparations and Processes - Report No. 8
Baghdad, 5 May 2021

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Highlights for the Month

- A key milestone in the timeline, the candidate nomination period was completed on 1 May with 3,523 candidates registered including 963 women.
- Decrees signed firming up election date and appointing FSC Judges.
- The voter registration update process closed on 15 April after two previous extensions.
- Latest VR data shows 16,777,337 voters (66.74% of the total voters) applied for biometric registration.
- IHEC signed contract on auditing of the results management IT systems.
- Decision under review on setting up so-called audit centres.
- Call for proposals on small grants for CSOs engagement in civic and voter education activities.
- IHEC considering specific COVID-19 safety measures to apply on E-day.

Presidential Decrees on Election Date and the Appointment of FSC Judges

On 12 April, the President of Iraq signed a decree on holding the Council of Representatives (CoR) elections on 10 October 2021. In his speech following the signing of the decree, the President referred to the decision taken by the CoR to dissolve itself by 7 October 2021. He also called upon all state institutions to fulfil the requirements for conducting the elections.

Also, on 10 April, the President signed a decree on the appointment of new Federal Supreme Court judges pursuant to the amended FSC Law (Order No. 30 of 2005). The new FSC judges took their constitutional oath on 11 April in the presence of the President and the Head of the Supreme Judicial Council. Therefore, quorum is now re-established in the Court which has the constitutional authority to certify CoR election results.

Candidate Nomination and Coalition Registration

After two previous extensions, the period for candidate nomination and coalition registration officially came to an end on 1 May. This marks the completion of one of the key milestones in the electoral calendar. IHEC is consolidating and cross checking all information on the number of submissions. The latest available information, as of 1 May, on candidates registered is 3,523 (2,560 male candidates, 963

* This report, the eight in a series, is prepared pursuant to UN Security Council Resolution 2522 (May 2020). In extending UNAMI's mandate, the Council instructs that the Special Representative of the Secretary General and UNAMI shall: "further advise, assist and support the Government of Iraq and the Independent High Electoral Commission with efforts to plan and execute genuinely free and fair Iraqi-led, Iraqi-owned elections and referenda, including through regular technical reviews and detailed reporting on electoral preparations and processes, as part of the Secretary-General's regular reporting cycle".



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female candidates). In terms of their background support, 1,634 candidates are supported by political parties, 1,002 candidates by coalitions and 887 are independent candidates. These figures will be updated once all candidate statistics are consolidated and cross-checked.

At the close of coalition registration on 1 May, there are 24 coalitions officially registered. Also, a total of 267 political parties are registered while 49 applications are still in process and subject to approval by IHEC.

Voter Registration Update and Biometric Voter Data Collection

Also, after a couple of extensions, IHEC concluded the voter registration update process on 15 April. IHEC then proceeded with a 7-day period to display and receive objections on the voter records at voter registration centres. This subsequent process ended on 22 April.

IHEC is currently crosschecking and deduplicating voter registration data. Based on current available records, there are 16,777,337 voters who applied for biometric registration, or 66.74% of the total. In terms of gender breakdown, 48% of those who applied for biometric registration are women. The distribution of voter cards is at 14,800,366 or 84% of the total biometric voter cards printed.

The voter registration data is still under review by IHEC and more detailed, gender and age-disaggregated information will be produced once the voter records are fully analysed and cleaned.

Audit of the Results Management IT System

IHEC signed a contract for auditing of results management system with Hensoldt, a company from Germany, on 8 April 2021. The Council of Ministers granted IHEC the approval on the provisions of the contract amount and the company's submission of a bank letter of guarantee.

On 3 May, the company deployed its technical team to Baghdad to commence the process. IHEC also set up a committee to follow up on the process.

Discussions on Audit Centres

The IHEC Board of Commissioners still has to take a final decision on the establishment of the so-called audit centres. On 7 April 2021, UNAMI shared an advisory note with IHEC advising against the establishment of such audit centres as an integral part of the electoral procedures, emphasizing that this would add an extra step to the process, could delay the announcement of results and might also affect the integrity and transparency of the electoral process. A follow up meeting took place on 12 April at the request of the IHEC CEO to further discuss the advisory.

On 26 April, IHEC, the Election Supreme Security Committee and UNAMI-Electoral met to discuss the technical and security implications of establishing the audit centres. Based on the discussions, there is



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consensus that the audit centres will not be established, the counting will be done immediately in the polling centres and the results will be announced in accordance with the provisions of Article 38.1 of the electoral law. This conclusion will have to be confirmed by a final decision of the IHEC Board of Commissioners.

Public Outreach Activities

On 18 April, the call for proposals (CFP) on small grants for CSOs for civic and voter education was officially published on the UNDP website, with a posting period from 18 April to 7 May. The deadline has been extended for another 2 weeks, until 21 May, to provide more time for CSOs to prepare their proposals. The CFP was disseminated widely through the UNDP and UNAMI websites and through social networks such as the NGO Coordination Committee for Iraq, lists of UNDP's former CSO partners, INGOs and the Development Aid platform. On 22 April, 35 representatives attended a virtual session where they had opportunity to seek clarifications and ask questions regarding the CFP. The call for proposal is accessible via the following weblink:

https://procurement-notice.undp.org/view_notice.cfm?notice_id=77565

On 13 April, IHEC organized a meeting with representatives of political parties, coalitions and individual candidates to update them on electoral preparations and clarifying procedures relating to regular and special voting, registration of political parties, alliances and candidates, the electoral constituencies and the mechanism for allocating seats for women. This was also an opportunity for representatives of political parties, coalitions and candidates to ask questions which the IHEC leadership responded to.

Following the completion of the voter registration update period, IHEC has started working on the next phases of public outreach. IHEC is addressing each electoral phase separately and is currently focusing on the outreach campaign for the distribution of voter cards. UNAMI had previously advised them on the need to develop a comprehensive and inclusive strategy and campaign covering the entire period, especially taking into consideration the engagement of selected CSOs for CVE small grants. Templates and examples of comprehensive outreach planning, strategy and products were shared to assist IHEC in such a process.

Other Technical Preparations

Invitations for international observation

IHEC continues to follow up on the invitation sent to embassies and international organizations inviting them to observe the 10 October 2021 elections. Of the 75 entities invited, IHEC has received feedback so far from nine (9) embassies. These include Lebanon, Philippines, Venezuela, Brazil, Turkey, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Japan and Greece. To date, only Lebanon has submitted a request for observer accreditation.



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Election Complaints and Appeals

During the 7-day period, ending on 22 April, when voter records were on display and open for objections, only a handful of objections were received by IHEC. These objections are mainly to address and correct entries to the voter list that is now being crosschecked by IHEC.

Despite progress in approving the complaints regulation, UNAMI is nonetheless encouraging IHEC to consider lessons from previous electoral exercises and review the electoral dispute resolution framework, including on the areas of complaints categorization, investigation, adjudication and informing the concerned parties on the decisions and outcomes of their particular complaints.

Information and Communication Technology

Further to the issue of IT servers for processing biometric voter registration, as raised in the previous report, IHEC informed that there is an available budget to procure new servers. IHEC is considering procurement through its existing vendor.

The IHEC vendor in charge of developing the results management IT system has started the printing of sample ballot papers to be used for simulation exercises on the RMS. During the simulation, 8,000 forms will be used to test the entire result process and feedback will be provided to further improve the election result process before the audit of the system.

IHEC is also proceeding with preparations for manual tabulation systems pursuant to the provision of the electoral law on the conduct of manual counting in one polling station in each polling centre. Involved IT staff are being trained on manual tabulation systems with UN support.

Procurement

IHEC is preparing for the conduct of the ballot lottery and has asked for UN support in procuring the ballot lottery machines. Several suppliers have been contacted for samples based on adjusted requirements given the average number of candidates in constituencies.

The contract for the supply of additional electoral devices, including polling station count optical scanning machines (PCOS), results transmission systems (RTS) devices, ballot papers for simulation and other related technology has been fully accomplished and all the goods have been received by IHEC and stored in its warehouses. On the other hand, the contract for the development of software for voter verification devices is still subject to further clarifications with the vendor.

IHEC has also received approval from the Council of Ministers to proceed with a direct contract for the printing of the final voter list, candidate's handbook, and voter list posters at the printing house of the Iraq Media Network. Similar approval was received to directly contract an international company for the printing of ballot papers. However, IHEC still has to firm up the cost estimates and final specifications for the ballot paper procurement.



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COVID-19 countermeasures

The IHEC Board of Commissioners approved the request prepared by the IHEC COVID-19 Committee on specific safety requirements and measures to be implemented on election day. These include possible arrangements for testing polling staff, disinfection of polling locations, and the provision of protective items such as masks and hand sanitizers. There are also efforts to develop informational materials such as posters and banners.

IHEC is coordinating with the Ministry of Health on these proposed measures, including the acquisition of required protective items.

Election Security

On 26 April, the Election Supreme Security Committee held its regular meeting. The security plan continues to be reviewed, including mechanisms for coordination. In addition, the Committee discussed the security implications of establishing audit centres with IHEC and the UNAMI representatives present.

GEO Preparations

Members of the IHEC Board of Commissioners and senior electoral administration officials continued to conduct visits to IHEC governorate electoral offices (GEOs). Focus during the month was on encouraging greater turnout for the voter registration update process, particularly in governorates where fewer voters were applying for biometric registration. Similarly, UN teams of electoral advisers deployed at UN regional hubs continue to engage with their IHEC counterparts to follow up on voter registration, outreach and various other operational activities. They also inquired on the status of complaints and challenges relating to the registration process and the registration turnout for IDPs.

All IHEC GEOs have confirmed that video teleconferencing facilities have been set up, including internet connection. This is to facilitate virtual coordination meetings between IHEC HQ and its field offices in the run up to the elections.

Note: UNAMI reminds all stakeholders that electoral preparations must remain free from political interference at all stages. This independence is essential to build public trust in the elections and their outcome.