



IECC discards up to 230,000 ballots

By [Ahmad Quraishi](#) Apr 30, 2014 - 11:54

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Independent Election Complaints Commission (IECC) on Wednesday declared null and void about 230,000 votes cast at 525 polling sites in the April 5 presidential polls.

After a public hearing on the issue, IECC Chairman Abdul Sattar Sadat wrote on his Facebook page the commission had decided to scrap the ballots. He called the action a key step in the fight against fraud.

Representatives of presidential runners, human rights bodies, civil society organisations, media and election observers attended the meeting.

Representatives of candidates floated their views and produced documents on why the ballots had been discarded by the Independent Election Commission (IEC). At the outset of the public hearing, Sadat said the meeting focused on access to 230,000 votes. "Candidates should present their documents on invalid votes at the sites to be evaluated openly."

He added 121 complaints had been lodged against preliminary results by four presidential candidates. Of them, 115 complaints lodged by Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, four by Dr. Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai, one each by Daud Sultanzoy and Gul Agha Sherzai.

Nine of the complaints that were recorded against the Independent Election Commission (IEC) would be assessed in the presence of representatives of candidates, he said.

Representatives of candidates gave their views on invalidation of the votes at the said polling sites, with IEC officials defending the action.

At the end, Sadat said they would decide on the fate of the votes by the end of the day and would share its decision with the IEC.

At the same time, IECC spokesman Nadir Mohsin said: "The meeting was held in a peaceful environment and we were able to lodge complaints and have the opinion of representatives of candidates."

In light of the opinion of both sides, IECC would take its decision and share the issue with IEC by the end of the day, he added.

Based on preliminary results announced a week ago, Abdullah stood first with 44.9 percent votes, followed by Dr. Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai with 31.5 percent.

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/04/30/iecc-discards-230000-ballots>



Respect poll panels' decision, runners asked

By [Abasin Zaheer](#) Apr 30, 2014 - 16:55

KABUL (Pajhwok): Some [Wolesi Jirga](#) members on Wednesday urged the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission (IECC) to stay neutral and asked candidates to respect the decision of the poll panels.

The IECC has registered more than 2,000 complaints in connection with the April 5 elections. It is set to decide the objections by the end of Wednesday.

An MP from Herat province asked the watchdog to review all complaints transparently. Ghulam Farooq Majrooh said: "I want all people and candidates to respect the commission's decision."

According to preliminary results, presidential candidates Dr. Abdullah Abdullah has secured 44.9 percent of votes and his closest rival Dr. Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai 31.5 percent.

A public representative from Kabul, Shukria Barakzai, also called for runners to respect people's mandate, alleging some contenders were out to raise questions about the electoral bodies' decisions.

Earlier, Abdullah had said he would not remain quiet if any the election commissions tried to snatch his mandate.

First Vice-President Qanuni has assured candidates: "I will defend your votes because it is my responsibility."

First Deputy Speaker Siddique Ahmad Usmani told the house both election commissions should discharge their duties in accordance with the constitution.

"I want the IECC to act like a judge and make decisions acceptable to all stakeholders. This will help prevent any crisis in the country," Usmani observed.

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/04/30/respect-poll-panels%E2%80%99-decision-runners-asked>



Inaugural ceremony for new president discussed

By [Pajhwok Report](#) May 1, 2014 - 16:15

KABUL (Pajhwok): President Hamid Karzai on Thursday ordered the creation of a commission to make preparations for the swearing-in of his successor.

Karzai's office said in a statement that a high-level meeting discussed measures for holding the inaugural ceremony for the incoming president.

Leading presidential runners Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, Dr. Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai, Vice-Presidents Mohammad Yunus Qanuni and Karim Khalili took part in the meeting. Acting Chief Justice Abdul Salam Azimi, [Meshrano Jirga](#) Chairman Fazal Hadi Muslimyar, [Wolesi Jirga](#) Speaker Abdul Latif Ibrahim and Karzai's Chief of Staff Abdul Karim Khurram were also in attendance.

The statement said the participants decided on constituting a commission to prepare the inaugural ceremony in a befitting way. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was directed to send out invitations to foreign dignitaries.

Amid predictions of a runoff election next month, the final outcome of the April 5 ballot is expected on May 14. According to the preliminary results, Dr. Abdullah has won 44.9 percent of votes, followed by Ahmadzai with 31.5 percent.

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/01/inaugural-ceremony-new-president-discussed>

Complaints to be reviewed next week

By [Bashir Ahmad Naadem](#) May 1, 2014 - 15:54

KANDAHAR CITY (Pajhwok): Seventy-four complaints have been recorded by provincial council candidates in southern Kandahar province, officials said on Thursday.

Sixteen of the complaints, to be assessed next week, are against police and the rest against the election commission, according to the Independent Election Complaint Commission (IECC) head for Kandahar.

Marvand Waziri told Pajhwok Afghan News security forces had been accused of not allowing observers named by provincial council candidates to enter certain polling stations.

Waziri indicated some of the complaints, if found valid, could affect the results. Election workers would demonstrate neutrality and transparency in assessing the objections, he pledged.

He added 98 more complaints had been filed against presidential aspirants, but they had already been assessed by the main office in Kabul.

According to Waziri, suspected ballots cast at 99 polling centres in favour of presidential contenders in Kandahar City and some districts had been quarantined.

Local authorities said 80 people, including seven women, were in the race for 15 provincial council seats. Twenty percent of the runners were new and the rest included tribal elders and old candidates.

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/01/complaints-be-reviewed-next-week>

US envoy wants poll panels to be neutral

By [Pajhwok reporter](#) May 1, 2014 - 19:14

HERAT CITY (Pajhwok): The US on Thursday called on Afghanistan's electoral bodies to stay impartial in the process of preparing presidential election results.

Addressing a press conference in Herat City, US Consul General Yojin Es Young said people would participate in the run-off vote with the same level of enthusiasm as they did in the April 5 elections.

The US and the international community would stand behind Afghanistan, he promised, saying that the Independent Election Commission ([IEC](#)) and the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission (IECC) should stay neutral.

The April 5 presidential and provincial council elections were more transparent than the 2009 election, he recalled. He said the international community would support every democratic step in Afghanistan.

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/01/us-envoy-wants-poll-panels-be-neutral>



Rebel commander failing to disrupt polls fired

By [Pajhwok reporter](#) Apr 30, 2014 - 14:18

KABUL (Pajhwok): A Taliban commander, Maulvi Abdul Qayyum, has been fired for failing to sabotage presidential and provincial council elections, a security official claimed on Wednesday.

He said Mullah Zakir was sacked by the Taliban's leadership council deputy head, Mullah Akhtar Mansoor, at the directive of Pakistan's Inter Service Intelligence ([ISI](#)). Presently, the man is under observation in Quetta.

"Some days back, a meeting was held between Mullah Akhtar Mansoor and ISI officials. During the meeting, Zakir was accused of failing to disrupt the April 5 elections," the source added.

The spy network of the neighboring country was upset with the fatalities suffered by rebels during the election days in Paktia and Kunar provinces, the official continued. More than 20 rebels, including Pakistanis, were killed in clashes with security forces during election days. Seventeen more rebel commanders, including Noor Qasim Sabiri, the Taliban shadow governor for Kunar, were killed in a drone attack.

But the insurgent movement said in a recent statement that Zakir had stepped down on medical grounds.

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/04/30/rebel-commander-failing-disrupt-polls-fired>

IECC publicly hears electoral complaints

By [Pajhwok reporter](#) May 4, 2014 - 17:33

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Independent Electoral Complaints Commission (IECC) on Sunday publicly heard cases of fraud in the April 5 presidential vote in the central zone.

Complaints from Kabul, Parwan, Kapisa, Maidan Wardak, Logar, Panjsher, Bamyan, Daikundi and Ghazni were reviewed at a meeting attended by civil society activists, election observers, media and candidate representatives.

Category-A objections involved documentary evidence, category-B complaints were decided by the commission and category-C complaints disposed of by the panel's provincial offices.

IECC Deputy Chairperson Reda Azimi told reporters that the meeting was the first of its kind reviewing complaints from central provinces.

Representatives of candidates and judicial officials were given time to defend their claims with proofs.

Most of the complaints were registered against presidential candidates Dr Abdullah Abdullah and Dr Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai.

But representatives of some runners did not agree with the IECC decision, saying producers of false documents should be prosecuted.

The complaints concerned fraud, ballot-stuffing, disruptions at some polling stations by illegal gunmen and refusal of entry to election observers.

Azimi said the five-day meeting would also review more than 2,000 complaints of four other zones. The commission will make its decision on the complaints next week.

She added commission workers were trying to address all complaints in the stipulated time and the result would be shared with the Independent Election Commission (IEC).

The IEC staffers involved in election fraud would be put on the black list and introduced to courts if charges against them were proven, she promised.

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/04/iecc-publicly-hears-electoral-complaints>



Sherzai joins forces with Abdullah

By [Muhammad Hassan Khitab](#) May 3, 2014 - 11:58

KABUL (Pajhwok): Presidential runner Mohammad Shafiq Gul Agha Sherzai on Saturday formally announced his support for frontrunner hopeful Dr. Abdullah Abdullah in the possible run-off vote.

Speaking at a joint news conference with Abdullah in Kabul, Sherzai said his decision to join Abdullah's team was essentially linked with ensuring peace, security and good governance in the country.

He added: "Our alliance is not aimed at power sharing; we have not struck a secret deal. I have joined forces with Abdullah to bring peace, stability, good governance, rule of law and merit..."

Sherzai also called on the Afghans to forge unity in their ranks, saying: "Those talking of Pashtuns or Tajiks are traitors."

Speaking on the occasion, Abdullah hailed the move, saying efforts to prevent the understanding had failed. He called Sherzai's decision a stride toward forging national unity. "We hope to see more such deals."

Based on preliminary results, Dr. Abdullah stood first with 44.9 percent or 2,973,706 votes followed by Dr. Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai with 31.5 percent or 2,082,417 ballots.

Zalmi Rassoul stood third with 11.5 percent (759,540) ballots, while ex-Jihadi leader, Abdul Rab Rassoul Sayyaf bagged 7.1 percent or (468,340) ballots and Qutbuddin Hilal 2.7 percent or (180,859) ballots.

The former Nangarhar governor, Sherzai, secured 1.6 percent or (106,673) ballots, Daud Sultanzoyi 0.5 percent or (30,737) votes and Hidayat Amin Arsala 0.2 percent or (15,394) votes.

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/03/sherzai-joins-forces-abdullah>



PC votes from 600 sites to be recounted

By [Meer Agha Nasrat Samimi](#) May 4, 2014 - 19:41

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Independent Election Commission ([IEC](#)) on Sunday said provincial council (PC) election results from results from 23 provinces have been entered into the database and ballots from 600 sites would be recounted.

The vote-counting process continued uninterrupted, Noor Mohammad Noor, the IEC spokesman, told Pajhwok Afghan News. The final results would be announced on scheduled, he said.

He said results from 23 provinces had been fed into the IEC database, with the counting process progressing satisfactorily. Votes from 600 polling sites will be recounted.

IEC officials, suspecting fraud, decided to recount votes from 600 polling sites and segregate genuine and fraudulent votes.

Noor said the IEC would announce preliminary results of provincial council polls in mid-May. The commission is yet to decide on the fate of votes from 444 presidential polling sites.

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/04/pc-votes-600-sites-be-recounted>



Karzai meets leading runners, election officials

By [Ahmad Ouraishi](#) May 4, 2014 - 21:05

KABUL (Pajhwok): President Hamid Karzai on Sunday discussed the election process with leading presidential candidates Dr. Abdullah Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai, as well as poll panel officials.

Heads of the two main electoral bodies briefed participants on the overall conduct of presidential and provincial polls, tallying of votes and dealing with complaints.

Karzai expressed his satisfaction with the successful holding of inclusive elections, calling the exercise a major stride toward strengthening democracy in the country, a statement from the Presidential Palace said.

Both Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani, praising the commissions for the successful holding of the elections, floated suggestion to ensure a transparent vote count and address relevant issues.

Second Vice President Mohammad Karim Khalili, Senate Chairman Abdul Hadi Muslimyar, [Wolesi Jirga](#) Speaker Abdul Rauf Ibrahimy, acting Chief Justice Abdul Salam Azimi,

Gul Rahman Qazi, [IEC](#) Chairman Mohammed Yusuf Nuristani and IECC head Abdul Sattar Sadat also attended the meeting.

Abdullah tweeted transparency and credibility of the elections was the real topic of discussion at the meeting. The possibility of a run-off vote also came up for discussion, he wrote.

The top runner said he was not satisfied with the explanations offered by the commission heads with regard to measures to make the result acceptable to all.

It is the second meeting Karzai has held with the leading candidates. The first was held three days ago when preparations for the incoming president's inauguration were discussed.

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/04/karzai-meets->



Election panel ready for possible runoff vote

By [Hasan Khitab](#) May 5, 2014 - 17:14

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Independent Election Commission ([IEC](#)) is prepared to hold a possible second round of presidential elections, an official said on Monday. IEC Secretary Ziaul Haq Amarkhel told reporters in Kabul the commission was prepared both technically and logistically for the conduct of runoff race.

Speaking to reporters on International Press Freedom Day, he acknowledged media outlets played a remarkable role in the success of the April 5 presidential and provincial elections.

Danish Karokhel, the editor-in-chief of Pajhwok Afghan News, said the conduct of election was a national responsibility and each media outlet had efficiently played its role in making it a success.

He added the IEC Media Monitoring Commission and the people of Afghanistan had lauded the role of news organisations.

Amarkhel said democracy was still young in Afghanistan and that was why the commission and the people of Afghanistan were experiencing new things.

He said: "We assure the people that the commission would maintain the supremacy of their vote at any cost. Pressures from any side would not weaken our resolve."

The official said fraud and rigging cases had been fewer, but more complex, in the April 5 polls. The commission's technical staff was unable to unmask culprits behind such cases.

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/05/election-panel-ready-possible-runoff-vote>



240 more election complaints being probed

By [Muhammad Hassan Khitab](#) May 5, 2014 - 17:35

KABUL (Pajhwok): In the run-up to the final outcome, the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission (IECC) on Monday evaluated more than 240 complaints. Representatives of civil society, candidates and media outlets attended the third public hearing into complaints from Kandahar, Helmand, Zabul, Uruzgan, Herat, Farah, Badghis, Ghor and Nimroz provinces. Most of the complaints were recorded in Kandahar and Herat provinces against Zalmai Rassoul and Dr. Abdullah Abdullah. Fraud by election workers, security forces and warlords were among the objections. Speaking on the occasion, IECC Chairman Abdul Sattar Sadat said: "After considering documents, decisions and views of our provincial officials and representatives of candidates, we will announce our decision." Asked if preliminary results would be affected as by the complaints, he said candidates' representatives had given good reasons in some instances, but in other cases, their responses were weak. <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/05/240-more-election-complaints-being-probed>



Fate of votes from 444 sites stays uncertain

By [Meer Agha Nasrat Samimi](#) May 5, 2014 - 22:20

KABUL (Pajhwok): A week has passed since the Independent Election Commission ([IEC](#)) said it was investigating suspect ballots cast at 444 polling centres, but their fate remains unknown.

On April 29, IEC spokesman Noor Mohammad Noor told Pajhwok Afghan News ballots from the 444 polling centres for presidential polls had not been incorporated in the preliminary results. He said a report about investigations into the suspicious ballots would be given to the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission to take a decision on their fate.

IEC officials would not reveal in which provinces these polling centres are located. This past week, Pajhwok had contacted IEC twice on the issue. Once Pajhwok was told investigations into the ballots had been completed, but later officials said the probe was still ongoing.

Once again Pajhwok contacted a senior IEC official, Ziaul Haq Amarkhel, who said their investigation into the 444 sites was near completion. "We are hopeful the IEC will make a final decision on the fate of these votes until tomorrow."

IEC officials had previously said the 444 sites had serious problems which led to the suspension of counting votes.

They cited votes in one box equal to two boxes, a lack of result sheets, reopening of boxes once locked and no labels on some boxes and other problems which led to putting the ballots into the quarantine. But Amarkhel said such problems were not uncommon when the number of polling stations exceeded 21000. IEC head Ahmad Yousaf Nuristani, while announcing the preliminary results on April 26, said audit into the 444 polling centres would need two days to complete before sending the findings to the Independent Electoral Commission (IECC).

To a question why the probe could not be completed so far, Amarkhel cited counting of votes cast for provincial council candidates as one of the reasons behind the delay.

"We have to work on the provincial council elections simultaneously with investigating the 444 polling centres. We want to conduct a thorough probe and collect authentic information and share that with the people."

He said the 444 centres were in 20 to 25 provinces, but the number of votes was unknown as yet.

However, some political analysts believe the IEC is intentionally delaying its probe into the 444 polling centres because the Presidential Palace wants the two top-rated candidates to form a coalition government.

Political expert Haji Syed Daud said although it remained unclear if votes of the 444 polling centres would have a big impact on the final results to avoid a runoff between the two leading runners, it was clear the Presidential Palace has been trying to strike a deal between the two --- Abdullah Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai.

"All eyes are fixed on votes cast at the 444 polling centres. The IEC should have made a decision on the fate of these votes and should have informed the masses."

After the preliminary results, President Karzai had twice met with Abdullah and Ahmadzai and IEC officials.

Amarkhel, who attended yesterday's meeting with Karzai, said there had been no discussion aimed at encouraging the two leading candidates to join hands.

He said the meeting had been confused on the ongoing electoral process and preparations for a possible runoff vote.

Meanwhile, an aide to Abdullah asked the IEC to announce the outcome of its probe into the 444 centres as soon as possible.

Abdullah's team member Syed Hussain Sanchakari said the delay in deciding the fate of these votes raised questions in minds of candidates and voters.

A member of Ahmadzai's team Azita Rifat said they expected the IEC would fairly investigate votes polled at the 444 centres before sending its findings to the IECC.

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/05/fate-votes-444-sites-stays-uncertain>