



Public hearing of election complaints ends

By [Muhammad Hassan Khitab](#) May 7, 2014 - 17:25

KABUL (Pajhwok): A four-day public hearing by the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission (IECC) ended in Kabul on Wednesday, officials said.

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

Attended by civil society activists, election observers, media and candidate representatives, the hearing came to an end after five meetings that addressed poll complaints.

IECC officers disposed of more than 240 complaints from Nangarhar, Laghman, Kunar, Nuristan, Paktia, Paktika, Khost, Samangan, Balkh, Jawzjan, Sar-i-Pul and Faryab provinces.

Most of the complaints were about fraud, ballot stuffing by Independent Election Commission (IEC) workers and local officials in favour of Ghani and Abdullah.

Some complaints show that ink used in Balkh was different from what the commission had provided. But representatives of the two runners said most of the complaints were baseless. Abdullah's representative Zalgai Sajjad criticised said: "The complaints registered by our team have not been included in the public hearing and those against us were heard." Syed Habib Hashimi, a member of Ahmadzai's team, rejected complaints against them as invalid and without evidence. He said such complaints were unacceptable to the team. But IECC Chairman Abdul Sattar Sadat said they would investigate Abdullah's claim and the provincial officers who did not take remedial measures in this regard would be punished.

IECC Secretary Nader Mohseni said the public hearing ended and a decision of votes from 36 suspected polling sites would be taken on Thursday.

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/07/public-hearing-election-complaints-ends>

Noor comes hard on electoral bodies

By [Zabihullah Ihsas](#) May 6, 2014 - 19:08

MAZAR-I-SHARIF (Pajhwok): Balkh Governor Atta Mohammad Noor on Tuesday hailed the April 5 elections as a success, but accused some election officials of being partial in tallying votes.

Noor was addressing a gathering in Mazar-i-Sharif to pay tributes to security forces for their efforts to protect voters and polling sites during the historic presidential and provincial elections. Government officials and tribal elders attended the gathering at the Governor's House. Noor praised the security forces, saying their role in the elections was commendable.

He described the past 13 years as a relatively satisfactory period in Afghanistan's history, barring some missed opportunities. Noor gave President Hamid Karzai the credit for his services to the nation, saying the head of state had been able to make certain achievements.

However, he was unhappy with the election results, rejecting complaints in Balkh about irregularities. "I don't say the entire election and the complaints commission are composed of wrongdoers, but among them, there are officials who have not been impartial and had committed fraudulent acts."

For instance, Noor said, 100,000 votes were invalidated within two days in western Herat province. He added people had enthusiastically taken part in the elections, but their sentiments were hurt and their wish to elect a president dishonoured.

"How can these votes be declared null and void in two days? How did they find time to do so when complaints were registered 10 days ago?," he asked. Noor said similar incidents had taken place in much of Afghanistan.

About the elections in Balkh, the governor said all but two polling centres had run out of ballot papers. There were no other problems, he continued.

Thousands of people could not vote in Balkh because of ballot papers' shortage, he said, and wondered when ballot papers were not available, then what prompted fraud.

"I have received some complaints from Kabul that I have closed a polling centre and stuffed ballot boxes. For God sake, who can do this?"

In reference to the Independent Election Commission and the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission, Noor asked the two bodies to avoid telling lies and bringing themselves under question.

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/06/noor-comes-hard-electoral-bodies>



Time for complaints registration extended

By [Muhammad Hassan Khetab](#) May 8, 2014 - 11:49

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Independent Electoral Complaints Commission (IECC) on Thursday said the time for registering complaints about votes from 444 polling sites had been extended by five hours, ending 1pm. IECC Secretary Nader Mohseni told reporters the decision was taken after results from the polling sites were uploaded five hours behind schedule on the Independent Election Commission (IEC) website.

He said candidates could lodge objections until 1pm. After investigating votes from the 444 sites, the IEC on Wednesday announced invalidating ballots from 36.

Mohseni said two complaints -- one each from leading presidential runners Dr. Abdullah Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai -- had been recorded.

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/08/time-complaints-registration-extended>



Poll complaints reviewed in eastern zone

By [Mahbob Shah Mahbob](#) May 8, 2014 - 16:01

JALALABAD (Pajhwok): Independent Electoral Complaints Commission (IECC) officials on Thursday said the review of complaints in eastern Nangarhar and Laghman provinces had been completed.

IECC chief for Nangarhar, Dr Abdul Wadood Afghan, said that they had registered 88 complaints about the April 5 presidential elections. Only three of them were shared with the main office; the rest were addressed by the regional office.

"Some of the complaints received were found invalid. In such cases, complainants were warned for making baseless claims," the official added.

The review process was not final and the IECC main office may bring changes to the final outcome.

IECC chief for Laghman province, Mohammad Aimal Haqmal, said 64 complaints were registered, including 21 category A objections.

Haqmal said category A complaints had been reviewed and shared with the IECC main office. Category B complaints are still being investigated.

He added most of the complaints were registered against provincial council candidates. Objections against presidential candidates reviewed first.

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/08/poll-complaints-reviewed-eastern-zone>

EU vows aid if elections go to 2nd round

By [Abasin Zaheer](#) May 8, 2014 - 16:40

KABUL (Pajhwok): The European Union on Thursday voiced its willingness to provide Afghanistan with financial and technical support if the presidential election went to the second round.

EU Special Representative Ambassador Franz-Michael Mellbin, speaking at a Europe Day event in Kabul, said they would assist Afghanistan in the run-off vote, just as it helped the first-round election.

"So far it's unclear whether or not the polls will go to the second round. If they do, we are ready to provide assistance," the diplomat promised. Should the run-off vote become inevitable, the stay of EU observers will be extended.

Europe Day is an annual day of celebration of peace and unity in the 28 member nations and around the world. The EU Delegation in Afghanistan dedicated Europe Day to celebrate the children of Afghanistan and invited about 300 school students to participate.

"Afghan children are important. Half of all Afghans are under 15 years old. With well over 13 million young Afghans, this group deserves genuine political attention," Mellbin remarked.

"Children are not voters; they have little or no voice in the public debate and no one to represent them.

One could be led to believe that investing in children doesn't pay off. This is not true. The current and coming leaders of Afghanistan should push harder to safeguard the interests of the nation's future."

The drafting of the much-needed Child Act has been announced for this year. The swift adoption of this law would show how much attention the president, the parliament and the government paying to Afghanistan's children, he added.

Eleven-year-old Maryam Rasikh, a student who took part in the event, stressed the need for peace and security was essential if Afghanistan wanted to join advanced nations. "We want the incoming president to give us peace."

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/08/eu-vows-aid-if-elections-go-2nd-round>



Complaints affecting final results probed

By [Muhammad Hassan Khetab](#) May 8, 2014 - 16:58

KABUL (Pajhwok): More than 900 complaints, believed to affect final presidential poll results, were probed by the Independent Election Complaint Commission (IECC) during the just-concluded public hearings, an official said on Thursday.

During the outgoing week, the watchdog held in Kabul six public hearings, attended by representatives of civil society, candidates, media outlets and election observers.

More than 2,000 election complaints have been recorded across the country. Of them, 900 placed in the first category were debated first. Such objections, if found valid, could affect final results.

Addressing a news conference, IECC Secretary Nadir Mohseni said 336 of the 900 complaints had already been debated by their provincial offices. But 60 of them were reviewed after candidates appealed for a reassessment.

During the public hearings, 552 complaints were debated and views of candidates' representatives ascertained, he added. The number of complaints from central zone stood at 132, western and southwestern zone at 246, northeastern zone at 74, eastern and southeastern zone at 133 and northwestern zone at 125.

Mohseni said two more complaints about the invalidation of ballots from 36 polling sites would be debated soon. A dozen more objections from Dr. Abdullah's campaign team would be debated once they received the IEC response.

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/08/complaints-affecting-final-results-probed>



Hezb-i-Islami Council swings behind Ahmadzai

By [Abaseen Zaheer](#) May 9, 2014 - 16:05

KABUL (Pajhwok): Led by Qazi Mohammad Amin Waqad, the [Hezb-i-Islami](#) Council on Friday lent its weight to presidential runner Dr. Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai. Addressing a gathering in Kabul, Waqad praised Ahmadzai -- a former finance minister -- as the only presidential candidate who had the ability to steer Afghanistan out of crisis.

He urged the runner to focus on strengthening peace, introducing an Islamic system, forging unity among Afghans and safeguarding national sovereignty.

"Our support is not politically motivated. We have decided to live with the people. Dr. Ghani Ahmadzai has been chosen by the teeming masses," the politician remarked.

Hailing from eastern Nangarhar province, he said: "Dr. Ahmadzai is a world-famous thinker, who has played no role in Afghanistan's destruction; he has not been involved in corruption."

Waqad, who worked as minister of communications in the Mujahedin government, asked Ahmadzai to build cordial relations with Afghanistan's neighbours and the world at large.

Ahmadzai welcomed support from the Hezb-i-Islami Council, saying Afghans were a united nation. All Afghans had equal rights, he said, remarking: "Today is a historic day. We have gathered here to serve the nation."

He called peace one of Afghanistan's basic needs and his team wanted stability -- not power. He intends to use power as a source of achieving goals and serving the nation. "There is a strong possibility of the elections going to a second round. Both Dr. Abdullah and I desire to preside over the entire country. We have no intention to represent only one ethnic community or region."

He called for Abdullah's team not to allow anyone to divide the nation. "Everyone who causes divisions among the people should be rejected," he stressed.

Ahmadzai firmly ruled out any underhand deal, saying that he believed in people's votes. He said whoever was elected should be accepted and respected.

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/09/hezb-i-islami-council-swings-behind-ahmazai>



IECC discounts Abdullah, Ghani concerns

By [Muhammad Hassan Khetab](#) May 8, 2014 - 18:33

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Independent Electoral Complaints Commission (IECC) chief on Thursday said the watchdog was striving to accomplish its mission in a transparent and fair manner, brushing aside apprehensions of the two leading candidates.

Abdul Sattar Sadat told reporters in Kabul they did not agree with the definition of free and fair elections given by the two top candidates – Abdullah and Ahmadzai.

He said the IECC was separating invalid votes from valid ones to make the election process transparent. Preliminary results announced on April 26 put Abdullah in the lead with 44.9 percent of the votes.

Ahmadzai came second with 31.5 percent. However, both candidates expressed their dissatisfaction with the outcome and asked the IECC to address their concerns.

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/08/iecc-discounts-abdullah-ghani-concerns>

Ghani, Abdullah at odds over delay in runoff election

By [Abaseen Zahir](#) May 9, 2014 - 16:21

KABUL (Pajhwok): Campaign teams of leading presidential candidates on Friday indicated they

were at odds on the delay in holding a possible run-off vote. Dr. Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai's team said it had no issue with a delay in the second-round election, but the Dr. Abdullah camp insisted on holding the polls on schedule.

A source in the Independent Election Commission (IEC) said on Wednesday the panel wanted the run-off elections to take place on June 14, although a second round has not been formally announced so far.

The official, who did not want to be named, said the commission had decided to hold the second-round ballot in mid-June -- 17 days behind original schedule. He refused to go into details.

Mohammad Amin Mrastial, a member of Ahmadzai's team, told Pajhwok Afghan News the IEC wanted to thoroughly investigate fraud claims before the second round.

"Many Afghans want fraud charges and violations of the election law to be probed seriously. Delaying the polls for reasons of transparency is better than ignoring irregularities," he remarked.

On the other hand, Fazlur Rahman Orya, Abdullah team's spokesman, said Afghanistan's constitution and laws were pretty clear on the second round of elections. He called for avoiding steps that were in conflict with the law.

He added the electoral bodies were duty-bound to implement the constitution and the election law. He asked the IEC to stick to its original timeline if a runoff vote became inevitable.

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/09/ghani-abdullah-odds-over-delay-runoff-election>

Flaws in first round won't recur in runoff: IEC

By [Meer Agha samimi](#) May 10, 2014 - 18:11

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Independent Election Commission (IEC) on Saturday promised flaws in the first round of the presidential vote would not recur in the runoff. IEC spokesman Noor Mohammad Noor told reporters in Kabul they would appropriately use the experience learnt from the first round in the runoff election to ensure transparency.

The final results of the presidential election are yet to be announced, but the commission plans a runoff in mid-June. He indicated preparations had been made for the possible second round, saying they ample progress had been achieved. "We have been able to arrange most of the materials required for the runoff polls. The IEC is gradually moving ahead and will share its schedule with the people in due course of time," he added.

Noor said before the announcement of final result, the IEC should fully know the outcome of complaints decided by the IECC. The scrutiny of objections ended yesterday.

Under the law, the IECC has to send its final report in complaints to the IEC. But Noor said the commission had not yet received the report. He explained the IEC would announce the final results after receiving the report from the watchdog.

In case there is no winner in the first round, the commission should set the runoff day while announcing the final results. The second round of polls should be held within two weeks after the final results are made public.

In order to meet some requirements, the commission says it may be difficult holding the runoff in the stipulated time. Noor said the panel had a held series of meetings with security officials on the transfer of election materials and securing polling sites.

“IEC has worked out a new plan for the second round. All gaps have been filled which existed in the first round. More sites will be established in crowded localities...” the spokesman continued.

About the results of provincial elections, Noor said 98 percent of the process had been completed. Votes from 1,024 sites have been reassessed, and the result sheets sent to the head office.

He hoped for the early completion of the process to let IEC announce the preliminary results of provincial council elections on June 7.

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/10/flaws-first-round-won%E2%80%99t-recur-runoff-iec>



Rassoul also lends his weight to Abdullah

By [Hassan Khitab](#) May 11, 2014 - 11:17

KABUL (Pajhwok): Presidential runner and ex-foreign minister Zalmay Rassoul and his election team on Sunday formally joined forces with former rival Dr Abdullah Abdullah.

Addressing a joint press conference with his one-time political foe in Kabul, Rassoul said he had swung behind Abdullah to balance the political situation and strengthen national unity.

Rassoul added he made the decision after consulting his team and majority of supporters agreed with the move. Others belonging to political parties did not show any interest. His first vice-president did not participate in the news conference but his second-vice president, Habiba Sarabi, was present.

The [Hezb-i-Islami](#) Afghanistan Council, which previously supported Rassoul, joined another presidential candidate, Dr Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai, on Friday.

Rassoul said the objective behind his joining hands with Abdullah was to narrow down tribal differences in the elections.

For his part, Abdullah welcomed the decision, saying it was in line with popular aspirations. He pledged to honour the promises he had held out to the Afghans and Rassoul. But he did not go into details.

Similarly, he asked the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission (IECC) to discharge its responsibilities in a transparent manner and in accordance with the law. The watchdog had shown weaknesses during the election process, he claimed, without elaborating.

With reference to the possible runoff vote, the leading runner said some of his election complaints were yet to be addressed. He did not explain the nature of complaints.

The preliminary results announced on April 26 put Abdullah in the lead with 44.9 percent of votes, followed by Dr Ashraf Ghani with 31.5 percent. Rassoul won only 11.5 percents of the ballots cast

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/11/rassoul-also-lends-his-weight-abdullah>



Hekmatyar-led HIA boycotts runoff vote

By [Pajhwok Report](#) May 11, 2014 - 12:09

KABUL (Pajhwok): The [Hezb-i-Islami](#) Afghanistan (HIA) faction, led by former prime minister Gulbadin Hekmatyar, will boycott the run-off election next month

, a media report said on Sunday. The Express Tribune, a Pakistan-based newspaper, quoted senior HIA leader Ghairat Bahir as saying the decision was driven by both leading presidential runners' support for the continued presence of foreign forces in Afghanistan.

Dead-set against the stay of *NATO*-led troops, the HIA took part in the April 5 elections, throwing its weight behind Qutbuddin Hilal. Hilal was placed fifth on the list of eight presidential candidates.

Bahir told the newspaper: "The Hezb-i-Islami's central executive committee has decided to boycott the second round of the elections. The party leaders have endorsed the decision."

He added the party, which had stayed away from the two previous elections, would neither support Dr Abdullah nor Ashraf Ghani as both favoured signing of the Bilateral Security Agreement with the US.

"Their (Abdullah and Ghani) manifestos clash with the Hezb's policies and that is why we have decided to boycott the runoff," he argued, believing transparent elections were impossible in the presence of foreign troops.

However, the HIA clarified the party would not use force to disrupt the process and would leave it to the people to decide whether or not to go to polling centres. Its spokesman Haroon Zarghoon promised they would attack polling sites.

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/11/hekmatyar-led-hia-boycotts-runoff-vote>



Senate amends Article 19 of Election Law

By [Abasin Zaheer](#) May 11, 2014 - 15:41

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Senate on Sunday amended Article 19 of the Election Law, enabling lawmakers to contest polls without resigning their lower house membership. Article 19 of the law says: "In case one of elected members, including nominated senators, intends to run for another elected seat, he/she is obliged to resign the membership of the current seat."

During Sunday's session, the Legislative Commission suggested an amendment to the article, said the panel's deputy head, Mohammad Hasan Hotak.

He said under the proposed amendment, parliamentarians running for *Wolesi Jirga* seats were exempted from the resignation condition.

Of the 62 members present, 55 voted for the amendment. Hotak said the amended Election Law would go to the Wolesi Jirga before being sent to the president for signing.

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/11/senate-amends-article-19-election-law>

IECC set to submit report on complaints

By [Pajhwok Report](#) May 11, 2014 - 20:17

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Independent Electoral Complaints Commission (IECC) on Sunday said it would be submitting its findings regarding electoral complaints by Monday to the Independent Election Commission (IEC).

IECC spokesman Nadir Mohseni told reporters in Kabul they considered transparency one of the watchdog's main principles. "Efforts are underway to finalise our findings into the complaints and submit them to the IEC by tomorrow."

Over the past two days, he said, they had been looking into documents produced by candidates, a process still ongoing.

He hoped the process would be complete until Monday and the ECC would be able to submit its final outcome to the election commission by that day, but a final decision in this regard had been taken as yet.

Under the election law, the IECC had to submit its findings to the IEC on May 8. But Mohseni said the delay was to ensure that justice had been done.

He said the too many documents needed enough time to be assessed in a transparent and neutral manner. If needed, he said, they would spend even more time in order to ensure justice, transparency and supremacy of law.

In response to a question, he said all decisions could not be taken in public and in front of the media.

The election law seeks the final election results from the IEC after the IECC finalises its assessments into complaints.

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/11/iecc-set-submit-report-complaints>

Rassoul's decision his personal: Faizi

By [Hakim Basharat](#) May 11, 2014 - 20:49

KABUL (Pajhwok): Zalmi Rassoul's support to presidential runner Dr. Abdullah Abdullah is his personal decision, President Hamid Karzai's spokesman said on Sunday.

Earlier in the day, Rassoul and his election team formally joined forces with former Abdullah. Rassoul said he had swung behind his ex-rival to correct the political balance and strengthen national unity.

Karzai's spokesman Aimal Faizi, in an exclusive chat with Pajhwok Afghan News, said the president had been neutral and supported no specific candidate.

He vehemently dismissed the impression that the former foreign minister's decision was based on Karzai's prodding. "It's Rassoul's personal decision and right to back whoever he wants to..."

Rassoul had neither met the president nor consulted him on joining forces with Abdullah, Faizi insisted, saying Karzai learnt about the development from media outlets.

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/11/rassouls-decision-his-personal-faizi>



Too early to name favourite runner: Mahmoud

By [Bashir Ahmad Naadem](#) May 12, 2014 - 11:09

KANDAHAR CITY (Pajhwok): President Hamid Karzai's brother Mahmoud Karzai on Monday said he would support a presidential candidate with a forward-looking policy and programme for Afghanistan's future in the looming runoff.

Mahmoud, a leading businessman and developer, had supported Zalmi Rassoul, a former foreign minister, in the first round of the presidential elections on April 5.

But Rassoul, who finished third, has now joined forces with frontrunner Abdullah Abdullah. Mahmoud's brother Qayyum Karzai dropped out of the race and endorsed Rassoul days before the ballot.

When asked whether he and Qayyum would follow in Rassoul's footsteps or swing behind Ghani in the second round of elections, Mahmoud replied no decision had been taken as yet.

He told Pajhwok Afghan News he and Qayyum would support one of the two leading candidates, who had more credible policies and future programmes.

"We have been consulting the people who stood behind us in the first round. We will back a candidate having the best economic plans and policies, which can bring peace and stability to the country and strengthen national unity."

Mahmoud said they held five consultative gatherings, but did not reach a final decision.

Asked whose policies and programmes enthused him most, Mahmoud replied he had not read the manifesto of Ghani, but he believed the economist had the ability to prove a better administrator and form a more efficient government. He said their economic policies matched those of Ghani.

But in the same breath, Mahmoud said he had shared his economic policy with Abdullah, who had endorsed that. He repeated it was too early to say who they would support in the runoff as they were looking at the policies and programmes of the two leading runners.

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/12/too-early-name-favourite-runner-mahmoud>

Abdullah's team claims widespread rigging

By [Muhammad Hassan Khetab](#) May 12, 2014 - 20:43

KABUL (Pajhwok): Frontrunner Dr. Abdullah Abdullah's team on Monday said electoral fraud had been committed at various stages of the April 5 elections and the fate of more than 900,000 votes remained unclear.

They produced some documents claiming widespread fraud during the first round of the presidential elections on April 5.

The documents show irregularities have been committed in the establishment of electoral sites, the vote tallying process at the Independent Election Commission (IEC)'s tally centre has been interfered with and results manipulated in some cases in favour of a specific presidential candidate.

The documents show result sheets given to Abdullah's team were different from those announced by the Independent Election Commission (IEC).

Abdul Sattar Murad, deputy head of Dr. Abdullah's electoral team, said the IEC was yet to decide the fate of more than 900,000 votes.

Of the 900,000 suspicious votes, he said, more than 500,000 had been cast for Dr. Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai and the remaining 400,000 votes had been missing and had not been recorded by the IEC.

He asked the two electoral bodies to respect the public mandate and discharge their responsibilities in a proper and transparent manner.

However, IEC denied any fraud had taken place in the vote tallying process, saying the process had been uninterrupted so far.



All votes of Paktia candidate invalidated

By [Sahil Mangal](#) May 13, 2014 - 12:10

GARDEZ (Pajhwok): All ballots of a provincial council runner from southeastern Paktia province have been invalidated by the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission (IECC), an official said on Tuesday.

One of their employees stuffed other candidates' votes into the ballot box of Shaista Jan Ahadi during the recounting process, IECC head for Paktia Bashir Bahram told journalists in Gardez.

He said the practice had prompted them to scrap all votes of Ahadi, who is also the incumbent provincial council head.

The Independent Election Commission (IEC) head in Paktia, Rahmatullah Haqmal, confirmed the incident. "We are in contact with the main office; the individual who used votes of other candidates in favour of a certain runner will be referred to the AG Office."

But Ahadi rejected the IECC decision against him as injustice. He said invalidation of his ballots meant insulting voters, urging his supporters to take notice of the issue.

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/13/all-votes-paktia-candidate-invalidated>