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Report on the End of Parliamentary Election Voting and Counting Proceedings November, 2010

Address: 5, 162 St, Maadi, opposite Hadayeq El-Maadi metro station. Tele: 25288832 –
02/25288834

Mobile: 0164847471

Email: info@egyelections.com

Introduction

With voting in the November 2010 People's Assembly polls drawing to a close, one of the most controversial parliamentary election ever held in Egypt is about to be over. These elections were caught between hopes for a new parliament that would lead the nation in the future, and calls for a boycott led by public figures and political parties. There was on-going speculation that the composition of the next People's Assembly and the election of the next president are directly linked, and the perception emerged that Parliament is merely a path to the presidency. In addition to this, there was the controversy among the officially registered opposition parties, national powers, and political lobbies regarding the attempt to provide public legitimacy, in addition to or apart from the legal and political legitimacy, to this election. Many traditional media outlets, satellite channels, and social networking sites were also part of this electoral process, with the internet being an important element of the Egyptian political scene. Against this backdrop, the November 2010 parliamentary elections were held, with the state – theoretically - welcoming observation by civil society organizations (CSOs) while flatly rejecting international observation. However, decisions issued in this regard bore little relevance to what happened on the ground as electoral observation was seriously undermined.

Nevertheless it must be pointed out– before shedding the light on the violations which marred the polls – that there was a remarkable improvement in conducting the electoral process. Violence was curtailed especially by security bodies, compared to 2005 parliamentary elections

and 2010 mid-term Shura Council elections. Such improvement fell short of our ambitions; however, it represented a start to build on in the future.

Given its considerable expertise in electoral monitoring, EASD has developed an observation methodology employing new technologies which enabled the public to follow Election Day proceedings as they took place. Observation came to an end and the violations reported – which were published in EASD’s statements and on its website – demonstrated the reality of the democratic process in Egypt, with the electoral process at its core as the most critical mechanism in the rotation of power. These indicators include:

Development of Observation Techniques

EASD’s election observation strategy depends upon the use of SMS technology; observers send answers to observation forms via SMS to the operations room. These messages are received by a dedicated server then uploaded to the EASD website, where they appear on electronic maps. Furthermore, hotlines were provided during all project phases for voters, candidates, and stakeholders to report violations.

In order for the information from the SMS to be properly displayed on the website’s electronic maps, polling stations, observation forms, and the questions on these forms are all coded. Observers enter in the appropriate codes, and the information is converted and displayed in the correct location on one of the site’s maps. This strategy does not require the observer to be inside a polling station to monitor electoral violations. If the observer is denied entry to or expelled from a polling station, they can send messages containing observation remarks or serious violations from outside these stations.

A Statistical Statement Of Voting Violations

With the People’s Assembly’s polls drawing to a close, EASD’s 5,000 observers deployed in 222 districts reported scores of violations of the law on exercising of political rights and the Higher Electoral Commission (HEC)’s resolutions, which tainted the electoral process. EASD gathered statistics on violations in connection with the opening of polling stations, voting procedures, and the closure of polling stations. Serious violations were reported via SMS sent by EASD observers in different districts, including:

- Barring and expelling EASD observers from polling stations throughout Election Day.
- The deployment of security forces and barricading of polling stations to bar voters from accessing them.
- Ballot stuffing, which was prevalent in some districts along with violence, the hallmark of Egyptian polls.

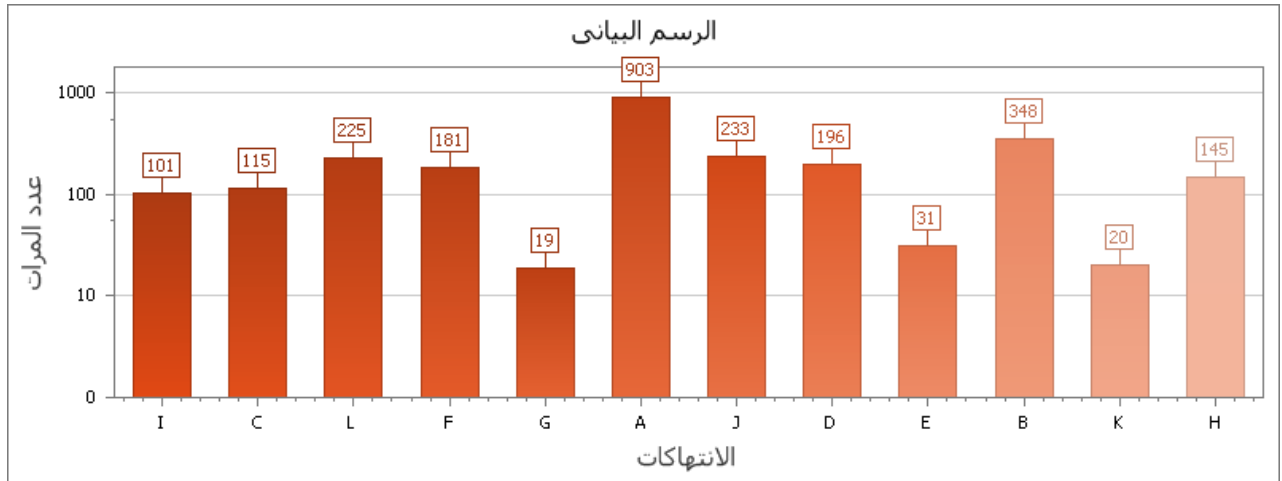
Observers noted numerous violations including:

First: Serious Violations

Out of 5,000 EASD observers, 903 (18.06%) were denied access to polling stations. Meanwhile, 348 observers (8.49% of those allowed to enter polling stations) were expelled from polling stations.

Other violations included: 115 incidents of voter intimidation, 196 instances of vote buying and electoral bribes, 31 incidents of police blocking roads leading to polling stations, 181 incidents of ballot stuffing, 19 instances of stealing or destroying electoral material, 145 instances of

closing polling stations during the day or before 7 p.m., 101 incidents of expelling observers, 233 incidents of electoral violence, 20 polling stations which never opened, and 225 instances of group voting.



Second: Violations in Connection with the Opening of Polling Stations:

The EASD observers noted: 158 polling stations which had no transparent boxes (wooden boxes were used instead), 1109 polling centers where campaign materials were posted inside, 221 stations which had campaign literature placed inside, 251 polling stations which opening late (after 8 a.m.), 231 polling stations where ballot papers were not counted, 377 stations which did not have an extra 10% of ballot papers on hand, 59 stations with unstamped ballot papers, 601 stations where EASD observers were not allowed to freely observe the opening procedures, 225 stations where observers were not allowed inside, 274 stations where unauthorized people were present inside, 158 stations which had no room to ensure the privacy of voters, and 69 stations which contained no indelible ink.

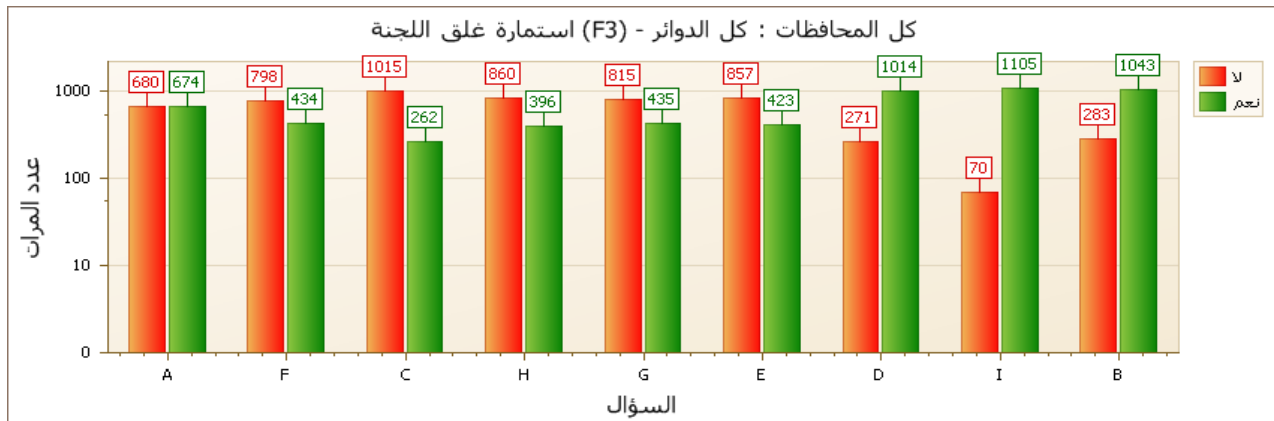
Third: Violations Relevant To Voting Procedures and Turnout Rate:

The EASD observers reported: 691 instances where observers were prevented from freely following voting procedures, 132 instances where voter identity was not verified, 206 incidents where – without legal grounds – voters were barred from casting their ballots, 353 incidents of group voting, 246 instances where the privacy of vote was not secured, 84 instances where indelible ink was used, 112 incidents where voters did not sign the electoral register, 244 incidents of illegal voting, 202 incidents of ballot stuffing, 362 instances where campaigning literature was brought inside polling stations in addition to 487 instances where voters' choices were influenced when casting their ballots.

Fourth: Violations In Connection with the Closing of Polling Stations:

EASD reported: 680 instances where EASD observers were not allowed to be inside when polling stations were closed, 283 incidents where candidate representatives not allowed inside at closing time, 1015 instances of barring voters from casting the ballot upon no legal grounds, 271 cases where privacy of the vote was not secured, 423 incidents where voters' choices were influenced during the vote, 796 instances where disabled voters received no assistance, 815 incidents where voters present inside polling stations were not allowed to vote after closing

time, 860 incidents where legally unauthorized persons were allowed inside polling stations, and 70 cases where closing minutes were not drafted.



Voter turnout:

Counselor Ahmed Shawky, head of the operations room at the High Elections Committee, declared an estimated voter turnout of about 25%, which is almost the same as the 2005 presidential and parliamentary elections. On the other hand, EASD observers reported a lower estimate of around 10% to 15%. Therefore, Egyptians' political participation has not significantly risen, which indicates that Egyptians have lost confidence in the electoral process. Egyptians are less concerned with participation in the public sphere, which could partly be accounted for by the weakness of Egyptian political parties and their inability to communicate with voters. The NDP is not any different in this regard. Every election, including this one, reinforces the NDP's status as a state institution rather than a political party. The 2010 parliamentary elections witnessed increasing popular protests from various segments of society in addition to a widening controversy about Egypt's political future, and the mobilization of supporters for potential presidential candidates. Despite such massive political and social mobilization, voter turnout in the 2010 elections reveals the shortcomings of Egyptians' political participation, which consequently denies the electoral process its major role of providing legitimacy to the ruling regime.

Parties and Elections

All Egyptian parties, except the Democratic Front Party and El-Ghad Party (Ayman Nour's front) took part in the People's Assembly elections amid calls to boycott the electoral process. The NDP has taken an unprecedented step in history of both the party and the whole world's elections; it nominated more than one candidate for a single seat, with up to five nominates for some seats. These "open districts" included NDP candidates competing with other NDP candidates and also other candidates in an unprecedented scene.

Observers of the parliamentary elections, however, from the 1979 elections until the previous People's Assembly elections in November 2005 have noted the nearly-complete domination of the NDP over parliament seats. The NDP seems to be the sole player in the Egyptian political scene as a result of its capacities and capabilities, which are basically those of the Egyptian state. Results for the 2010 election indicate a clear superiority of NDP candidates vis-à-vis others, at a time when the weak representation of Egyptian opposition parties persists in all elected councils whether in terms of numbers of candidates or in terms of election results. The relation between parties and elections seems to be absent.

Finally, EASD emphasizes that all observations from elections day violate the decrees issued by the HEC and the law of exercising political rights, in addition to violating related international conventions. Since preliminary results point to run-off elections in most districts on December 5th 2010, EASD emphasizes the importance of the following during this phase:

- Allow CSOs to observe all phases of the electoral process, starting from observing voter registration, and ending with observing vote counting and the announcement of results.
- Restore judicial supervision over the electoral process.
- Amend the law of exercising political rights.
- Empower the HEC to fulfill its role, and grant the HEC competencies and mechanisms to manage the electoral process.