

ELECTION OBSERVATION REPORT LOCAL BODIES ELECTION 2005



By

International Human Rights Observer (IHRO)

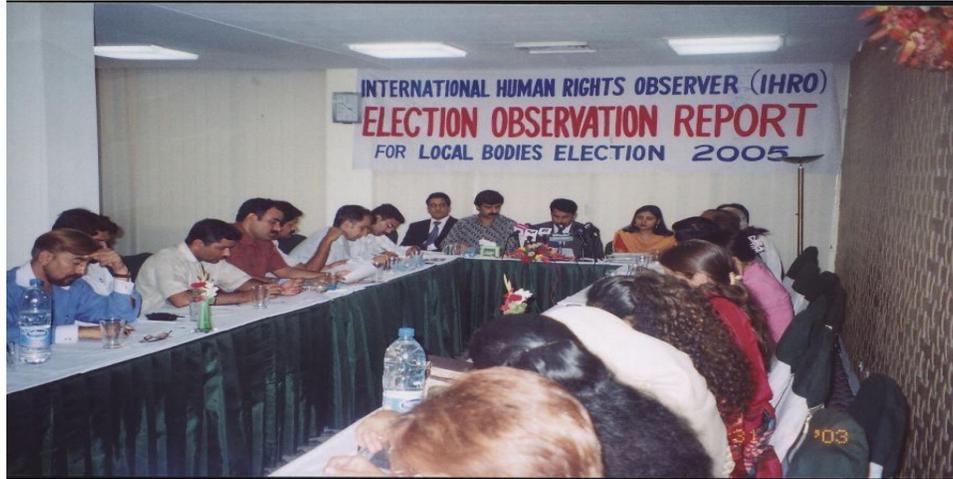
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INTRODUCTION

International and National election observation has become an important mechanism to ensure election integrity in countries undergoing a democratic transition or in post-conflict societies. The Local Bodies Elections can be considering the backbone of democratic process of Pakistan. It boosts the national level by providing support and sustainability. This year the election commission of Pakistan decided to organize election in 108 districts of country in two levels equally. Accepting this significance of this scenario IHRO planned to monitor this election at a broader spectrum.

Being the human rights organization IHRO make sure the holding of free and transparent election where common people have the right to cast their vote with the full freedom and liberty, which was provided according to the constitution of Pakistan. As per our mandates IHRO has been monitoring the election process in country since 2001 with the strong support of its 6000 volunteer's member network in Pakistan.

This year on the request of IHRO the election commission of Pakistan has issued 1250 cards to the members of International Human Rights Observer in different contingencies of four provinces of country. It is very first time in history of Pakistan that any non-governmental organization has monitored the election with such a big network of members.

In this local bodies' election IHRO's Monitoring Cell has observed following issues:

Election Facilities:

It has been observed that overall election commission has provided the required election material e.g. stationary, ink-pads, pencils, ballot papers, ballot boxes and etc. But there were reports from many polling stations that the material was not in sufficient amount or poor quality. The staff of polling station has complained about the dry ink-pads, poor printing of elections sign on ballot papers, false registration of data. There were reports from our observers that the election commission has provide this material very late on polling station that large number of voters left polling stations without casting their votes.



Election facilities for Women and disable voters:

In all districts of country our teams have strictly observed that the government and all election parties have strongly encouraged women voters in their rallies especially in the NWFP government took solid steps for the women to cast their votes.

But unfortunately it was observed that on the Election Day the facilities were not satisfactory or up to the standards for women voters. There were reports of stopping

women from casting their votes in few districts of Punjab, Sindh and Blochistan along NWFP which is clearly an open violation of election commission' Code of Conduct.

There were reports of indiscipline on the women polling stations as male returning officers were found to be running sometimes toward male and female polling stations. It was also observed that on some female polling stations election commission has appointed male returning officer, which became the reason of uneasiness and disturbance among women voters. Women were seen to cast their vote in-group rather than in rows that set back the discipline of polling stations. Due to it some of the women voters were unable to cast their vote.



Political and government influence:

Election commission has restricted the government officers, ministers, and members of parliament to visit any polling station during elections according to its Code of Conduct. But there were reports of involvement of this above-mentioned group in rallies; electronic and print media reported same facts. So the claim of influential election will not be unjustified.

Freedom of Right to Vote:

It was observed that voters have full freedom and liberty to exercise their right. But there were reports from some areas that workers and supporters of political parties were active

to convince voters. In Bannu, our observer reported the selling of a vote in fifty rupees. Likewise our observer report that he observed a woman who claimed that she has influenced five old people to vote for her selected candidate.

Security Arrangements:

This time government has made the tight security arrangements in sensitive and perspective areas of specific districts. But the staff was not found dutiful and submissive. It was also observed that majority of people did not come out of their homes due to the fear and terror. Some of the voters were found to be complaining about the misbehaviors of security staff.

Reports of murders, violence and polling of bogus voters:

All the claims of election commission were failed when the thirty-five people and hundreds of injured were reported. The core reasons were failure of security arrangements, conflicts b/w candidates and voters, late start of polling, absence of elections sign on ballot papers, personal grudge, polling of bogus votes, absence of regulations in polling process, mistakes and blunders in voters list.

Behavior with Election Observers:

It was very unfortunate that election observers were victimized of violence in all over the country specially Quetta, Lasbella, Pasheen, Qila Abdullah, Faislabad, Bahwalpur, DGK from Punjab. Same reports were received from Abbottabad, Lukkymrrvat, Badgram, Manshera and Hayderabad, Sanghar, Sakhar, Nawbshah and shakrpur from Sindh. During the elections ten of our observers were kidnapped from unknown people who also snatch their information data, cameras, cell phone and etc. our observer Shahid Zia was victimized badly that he loosed his two teeth in cruelty. In shamsabad police arrested Ifrahim Qurashi during duty hours and was put into lock up. Police not only torture him but they also snatched his mobile phone, documents and other things.

We believe that it was responsibility of the government of Pakistan to create awareness and knowledge about election.

Recommendations of Report:

These observations demand from Election Commission of Pakistan to

- Election commission need to make the election system more transparent and fair

- More advocacy program should be launched in community to spread knowledge about elections and significance of casting vote
- Proper and correct voter's lists that covers all the names of voters. Especially the numbers of Identity cards are needed to be rechecked.
- There is need to improve the "Code of Conduct" with the understanding of political parties and observer organizations. In this aspect we would suggest a consultative committee of these groups for better working on the Code of Conduct.
- It was strongly feel the need of permanent and self-independent election commission during these elections.
- Security arrangement should be more strict and tight to stop the bogus polling and creating sense of security among polling staff and voters.
- There is strong need to contact standard companies for printing and developing the election material.

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