



Fact Sheet

Bureau of South Asian Affairs
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Elections in Afghanistan

On September 18, 2005, the Afghan people will return to the polls to elect representatives to the Lower House of the National Assembly and members of Provincial Councils. Once the National Assembly has been seated, the transitional process by which the Afghan people have emerged from years of civil war, political violence and misrule to achieve sovereignty and freedom under democratic rule will conclude.

Joint Electoral Management Body

- On July 26, 2003, the Government of Afghanistan established the Joint Electoral Management Body ("JEMB"), a 13-member independent body (consisting of 9 Afghan and 4 international commissioners), to oversee the electoral process during the transitional period in Afghanistan.
- The JEMB Secretariat is the executive arm of the JEMB and is responsible for implementation of the electoral operation. The JEMB Secretariat will have 6,000 Afghan and 425 international staff active in 8 regional and 34 provincial offices.

Voters

- More than 10 million Afghans (41% of them women) registered to vote in the October 2004 presidential election.
- For Afghans who did not register to vote last year, the JEMB conducted voter registration from June 25 through July 21. Over 1.5 million new voter registration cards were issued, 44% were to women voters.
- To be eligible to vote, a person must be at least 18 years old and a citizen of Afghanistan.

Lower House of the National Assembly

- On September 18, voters will directly elect representatives to the 249-person Lower House ("Wolesi Jirga" or House of People) of the National Assembly. Seat allocations in the Lower House are proportional to the population of the provinces.
- Afghan citizens over the age of 25 who are registered to vote, have not been convicted of committing a crime against humanity, and who do not have ties to illegal armed militia groups are eligible to run as candidates for the National Assembly.
- A total of 2,707 candidates (328 women) are registered to run for Lower House seats.

Provincial Councils

- Voters will also elect members of 34 provincial councils, the size of which are determined by the population of the province. Provincial Councils will participate in the development of the provinces and improvement of provincial administration.
- Afghan citizens who are at least 18 years old, are registered to vote, and have not been convicted of committing a crime against humanity can be nominated as candidates for the Provincial Councils.
- A total of 3,025 Afghans (247 of them women) have been nominated as candidates for the Provincial Councils.

Upper House of the National Assembly

- Once elected, each Provincial Council will elect one of its members to sit in the Upper House ("Meshrano Jirga" or House of Elders) of the National Assembly.
- Under the Afghan Constitution, the 102-person Upper House also includes representatives indirectly elected by district councils (34) and representatives appointed by the President (34).
- District Council elections were originally scheduled to take place at the same time as the Lower House and Provincial Council elections. Since district numbers, boundaries and population figures have yet to be determined, District Council elections will not be held in 2005. The National Assembly, once constituted, will be tasked by the President to resolve the district issues.
- In order to maintain balance between indirectly elected members and presidential appointees, it is anticipated that President Karzai will appoint only half of his representatives to the Upper House (17) which will sit with 51 members until District Elections have taken place.

Representation of Women

- The Afghan Constitution and Electoral Law guarantee the representation of women in the Lower House and in Provincial Councils.
- In the Lower House, 68 seats have been reserved for women candidates. Two seats have been set aside for women delegates in each of the 34 Provincial Councils.

Polling Stations

- Polling will take place in 28,157 polling stations in 6,000 locations throughout Afghanistan.
- Afghans will vote in exclusively male or female polling stations staffed by almost 200,000 polling staff.

Election Budget

- UN and Afghan authorities predict that the total election budget will be about \$159 million of which \$157 million has been received or pledged.
- The United States is the largest single donor, contributing over \$60 million to the National Assembly elections.

Election Security

- Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police forces, with support from Coalition and NATO/ISAF forces, stand ready to implement a comprehensive security strategy to ensure that extremist elements do not disrupt the electoral process. 20,000 U.S. and 12,000 NATO/ISAF troops are serving in Afghanistan. Three additional NATO/ISAF battalions have been added for the election period.

Post Election Process

- After the election, ballots will be collected in provincial counting centers.
- It is estimated that vote counting may take 3 – 4 weeks. During this period the Electoral Complaints Commission will investigate election-related complaints.
- Once complaints have been addressed and the counting of ballots has been completed, election results will be announced.



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