



New IEC members take oath, vow neutrality

By [Syed Mudassir Ali Shah](#) Jul 31, 2013 - 16:18

KABUL ([PAN](#)): Newly-nominated Independent Election Commission ([IEC](#)) members were sworn in at the Presidential Palace on Wednesday; a couple of days after President Hamid Karzai approved their appointments.

Karzai administered oath to Abdur Rahman Hotaki, Gulalai Achakzai, Sharifa Zurmati, Ahmad Yousaf Nuristani, Sareer Ahmad Barmak, Laila Ihrari, Qazi Suleman Hamid, Mohammad Aziz Bakhtiar and Mohammad Hussain Garziwani.

[Wolesi Jirga](#) Speaker Abdul Rauf Ibrahim, Chief Justice Abdul Salam Azimi and outgoing IEC head and members attended the oath-taking ceremony, a statement from the Presidential Palace said.

The incoming commissioners pledged to perform their duties with sincerity, efficiency, complete neutrality and in line with the constitution and other laws of Afghanistan.

Following the ceremony, Karzai asked foreigners not to interfere in the electoral process and pledged his government would not influence the polls. He was optimistic of the new commissioners measuring up to public expectations.

Karzai commended the services of the outgoing IEC chief and staffers. He congratulated the new members of the panel and wished them the best of luck in their assignments.

Addressing the new members of the poll panel, the president said they shouldered a great responsibility in boosting democracy in the country.

Link: <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/07/31/new-iec-members-take-oath-vow-neutrality-0>



FEFA alleges anomalies in voter registration

By [Mohammad Asif Ahmadzai](#) Jul 31, 2013 - 22:32

KABUL ([PAN](#)): An independent election watchdog on Wednesday alleged brazen irregularities in the ongoing voter registration process ahead of the 2014 polls.

As part of preparations for next year's presidential and provincial council elections, the second phase of the registration process is being conducted at the district level.

The first phase at the provincial capital level was launched on May 26. The [IEC](#) has planned programmes to inform people about voter registration and other preparatory measures.

In a report, the Free and Fair Election Foundation of Afghanistan (FEFA) said insecurity in several provinces was directly affecting the registration of voters.

Four blasts near a voter registration centre in southeastern Paktia province illustrated the insecure environment, according to FEFA. As a result, the centre had to be closed for a day. A similar incident transpired in Farah as well.

By the same token, the foundation said, the insurgents had spread propaganda in Zabul and Paktika provinces that voter registration was in conflict with Islamic teachings.

Registration centre workers in Kabul, Faryab, Ghazni, Ghor and Badghis provinces did not bother about observing duty timings, the watchdog pointed out. In Uruzgan, 120 eligible women were allegedly denied voter cards.

Prospective provincial council candidates in Balkh were accused of coercing schoolchildren as well as teacher training college students into registering themselves as voters.

The students were warned they could be barred from appearing in exams if they stayed away from the registration process, the report claimed.

Similar anomalies in Herat, Zabul, Parwan, Jawzjan and Baghlan have led to depriving eligible citizens of receiving voter cards. In some instances, sensitive election materials were not sealed.

In Kabul, Nimroz, Badghis and Zabul, underage individuals were issued with voter cards, said the report, which continued one public representative from Nimroz threatened FEFA monitor with dire consequences.

Registration centres for women in some provinces are located at inappropriate places, where females feel insecure, according to FEFA.

Link: <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/07/31/fefa-alleges-anomalies-voter-registration>



Yousaf Nuristani elected new IEC chief

By [Abasin Zaheer](#) Aug 3, 2013 - 13:43

KABUL ([PAN](#)): Dr. Ahmad Yousaf Nuristani and Abdul Rahman Hotaki were elected respectively as Independent Election Commission ([IEC](#)) chairman and deputy chief on Saturday.

IEC member Sharifa Zurmati told Pajhwok Afghan News that Nuristani defeated Sareer Ahmad Barmak while Hotaki outpolled Qazi Suleman Hamid.

They replace Fazal Ahmad Manawi and Abdul Khaliq Hussaini. Also a former lawmaker, Zurmati said Gulalai Achakzai was elected as IEC secretary.

Last week, 27 people were recommended by the selection committee to President Hamid Karzai, who picked nine of them as IEC members.

Karzai appointed Abdul Rahman Hotaki, Gulalai Achakzai, Sharifa Zurmati, Ahmad Yousaf Nuristani, Sareer Ahmad Barmak, Laila Ihrari, Qazi Suleman Hamid, Mohammad Aziz Bakhtiari and Mohammad Hussain Garziwani.

They were sworn in at a ceremony the Presidential Palace on Wednesday. The new commissioners pledged to demonstrate complete neutrality and ensure transparency in the polls.

Link: <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/08/03/yousaf-nuristani-elected-new-iec-chief>



Clerics declare suicide attacks un-Islamic

By [Azizullah Hamdard](#) Aug 5, 2013 - 00:36

KABUL ([PAN](#)): Religious leaders on Sunday declared suicide attacks as *haram* (illegitimate) and illegal, asking insurgents to shun such acts of violence.

Addressing a gathering of religious scholars in Kabul, the Afghanistan [Ulema](#) Council head, Maulvi Qayamuddin Kashaf, strongly condemned Saturday's suicide attack on the Indian consulate in eastern Nangarhar province.

The blast in front of the Indian consulate in Jalalabad City killed at least eight people and injured 22 others. The dead and wounded include children.

Kashaf said the attack took place near a [mosque](#), killing several innocent people, including children, who had come to the mosque to offer prayers.

He said Islam prohibited killing the innocent and such killers would be severely punished in the hereafter life.

Kashaf said instead of allowing peace to prevail in the holy month of [Ramadan](#) and sending out the message of brotherhood, the insurgents carried out bloody attacks in violation of Islamic teachings.

Kashaf once again called suicide attacks as illegal and against Islam and called on insurgents to give up insurgency and join peace parleys.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the United States Embassy in Kabul have also condemned Saturday's group suicide attack in Jalalabad.

Link: <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/08/05/clerics-declare-suicide-attacks-un-islamic>



UN offers support to new election panel

By [Pajhwok reporter](#) Aug 4, 2013 - 18:55

KABUL ([PAN](#)): The United Nations on Sunday welcomed the appointment of new Independent Election Commission ([IEC](#)) members, followed by the expeditious election of its chairperson, deputy chairperson and secretary.

The world body congratulated the new commissioners, saying it looked forward to working with them in support of their duty of preparing next year's presidential and provincial council polls. A statement from the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan said the establishment of the electoral dispute resolution mechanism was equally crucial for ensuring transparent, credible and inclusive elections.

“An inclusive appointments process is an important development in the establishment of a credible and robust electoral architecture for Afghanistan's presidential and provincial council elections.

UNAMA said the selection process benefitted from the participation of a civil society representative as provided for in the law, and expected in regard to the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission that this requirement would be met.

The mission called on all concerned to engage constructively in efforts to ensure that the elections were held according to the Afghan Constitution and the IEC's timeline. It reiterated that meeting the timelines was not only possible, but essential.

Link: <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/08/04/un-offers-support-new-election-panel>



Who's who in new election commission?

By [Abasin Zaheer](#) Aug 4, 2013 - 17:08

KABUL ([PAN](#)): One of the new Independent Election Commission ([IEC](#)) members is a doctor of philosophy, six have master's degrees and another is a graduate.

Last week, President Hamid Karzai appointed Abdul Rahman Hotaki, Gulalai Achakzai, Sharifa Zurmati, Ahmad Yousaf Nuristani, Sareer Ahmad Barmak, Laila Ihrari, Qazi Suleman Hamid, Mohammad Aziz Bakhtiari and Mohammad Hussain Garziwani as IEC members. They were sworn in at a ceremony at the Presidential Palace on Wednesday. The new commissioners pledged to demonstrate complete neutrality and ensure transparency in the polls.

Dr. Ahmad Yousaf Nuristani, Chairman: Born in 1947 in the Shigram village on the outskirts of Paron, he received his early education at the Rahman Baba High School in Kabul. From 1975 to 1978, Dr. Nuristani worked as a Graduate Research and Teaching Assistant at the Department of Anthropology, University of Arizona in the United States of America.

He also worked as Assistant Professor at the Department of Social Sciences and Humanities at the Kabul University. He received his Ph.D. in Near Eastern Studies from the University of Arizona. Nuristani was the spokesperson for President Hamid Karzai and chief of the presidential media team during the interim administration. Subsequently, he was appointed as a minister of irrigation and 1st deputy defense minister.

Abdul Rahman Hotaki, Deputy Chairman: Born in 1961 in Kabul, he completed high school education in the capital before travelling to Moscow, where he earned a Master's in Social Sciences from a government-run university. Over the past 12 years, he has served as a human rights campaigner, Civil Society Coordination *Jirga* chairman, member of the South Asians for Human Rights and held senior positions in private-sector universities in Afghanistan and abroad.

Gulalai Achakzai, Secretary: Born in 1963 in Kandahar City, Achakzai completed her high school education in the southern city before obtaining a degree from the *Shariah* Faculty of Kabul University. She also earned a master's in Social Sciences from the same university. After that she taught at various high schools. She worked at the Education Ministry and remained associated with an organisation assisting people with disabilities. She had also served on the Afghanistan Human Rights Commission and represented Afghan civil society at the Berlin International Conference on Afghanistan. A member of the consultative *Loya Jirga*, Achakzai has recently served as a senior advisor at the Ministry of Women's Affairs. She denies having links with any political parties.

Prof. Hussain Garziwani, member: Garziwani was born in 1956 in the Garziwan district of northern Faryab province. Having a medical degree from the medical faculty of Kabul University, he did his masters in geology from Azerbaijan.

He taught geology at the Kabul University and served as deputy head of the geology faculty.

He has been a commissioner on the IEC over the past one and a half year.

Sharifa Zurmati, member: Born in 1969 in the Zurmat district of southeastern Paktia province, Zurmati studied literature at the Kabul University. A former member of the *Wolesi Jirga*, she represented the civil society at the Tokyo conference on Afghanistan. A member of the Consultative Loya Jirga, she had served as advisor to both houses of parliament.

She has worked as spokesperson and reporter for the Afghanistan Radio and Television and other media outlets. She was deputy head of the Afghanistan Independent Journalists Union and a member of board of the Journalists Federation. Having worked voluntarily with foreign aid agencies, she was member of the Afghanistan Free and Fair Election Foundation and also worked at the ministries of women's affairs and public health.

Mohammad Aziz Bakhtiari, member: Born in 1963 in the Jaghori district of southern Ghazni province, Bakhtiari completed his high school in the same district. He obtained a master's in Islamic Education and Sociology from the Qom University in Iran, where he taught the same subjects at the Imam-i-Khomeini University.

Founder of the Katib University in Kabul, he served as advisor to the Ministry of Education in Kabul.

Laila Ihrari, member: Laila Ihrari was born in Herat City, the capital of western Herat province, in 1970. She completed her high school education in Herat and obtained a master's degree in pharmacy from Kabul University. She went to India for studies concerning elections.

Ihrari said she had been studying political sciences at Kabul University, but left incomplete her studies in the third semester due to some problems. She served as head of medical faculty of Kabul University and worked with UNICEF. She was member of the Consultative Loya Jirga from Herat. She served at the IEC for capacity building and creating awareness about elections.

Sareer Ahmad Barmak, member: The 35-years-old was born in Kabul, but his ancestors belong to central Panjsher province. He completed his high school education at the Nadiria High School in Kabul and obtained journalist degree from the Kabul University. He obtained a diploma in South Africa in human rights and transitional justice.

He said to have obtained a master's degree from a UK university in governance and international development.

He headed UNDP good governance programme and served as adviser to the IEC and spokesman for the Judicial and Justice Centre's anti-narcotics section. He was chief of the Global Rights organisation.

Member Qazi Suleman Hamid, member: Hamid was born in Qala-i-Naw, the capital of northwestern Badghis province, in 1960. He completed his high school in Qala-i-Naw before joining the Imam Fakhar Razi seminary in Herat to peruse religious studies.

He did his master's in Criminal Justice Identification from the Payame Noor University in Iran. Hamid was head of the Herat commerce court and Badghis court. He represented Badghis in the Loya Jirga on the constitution and the consultative jirga. He was adviser to President Karzai on justice and judicial affairs and deputy Haj and Auqaf Minister. He served for four years as commissioner on the IEC.

Link:

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/08/04/who%E2%80%99s-who-new-election-commission>



President commends transition of election panels

By [Pajhwok reporter](#) Aug 5, 2013 - 16:41

KABUL ([PAN](#)): The new Independent Election Commission ([IEC](#)) appointment in accordance with the constitution was a key step that would lead to stability in the country, President Hamid Karzai hoped on Monday. During a meeting with outgoing IEC head Fazal Ahmad Manawi and members of the Electoral Complaints Commission, the president commended the services of the two panels.

"The successful completion of your assignment and transferring it to the new commission in accordance with the law will play a crucial role in stabilising and consolidating the country," the president remarked.

A statement from the Presidential Palace said apart from Manawi, Hussaini Pashai, Syed Hashim Foad, Reda Azimi and Ghulam Dastagir attended the meeting.

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Link: <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/08/05/president-commends-transition-election-panels>



IEC handed policy on women's role in polls

By [Meer Agha Nasrat Samimi](#) Aug 5, 2013 - 16:35

KABUL ([PAN](#)): The Ministry of Women's Affairs on Monday handed the election panel a policy concerning women's representation in elections and providing them required facilities in this regard.

Salient features of the policy include registration of women voters, a door-to-door awareness campaign, distribution of voter cards in remote parts through mobile teams and opening of polling centres close to homes.

The policy on women's participation and role in elections was prepared in one year's time.

Deputy Minister of Women's Affairs Mujhgan Mustafavi and [Wolesi Jirga](#) Commission on Women's Affairs head Fauzia Kofi jointly presented the document to Independent Election Commission Secretary Ziaul Haq Amarkhel for implementation.

Kofi told reporters that women's participation in the voter registration campaign had so far been weak -- an issue she believed could be resolved with launching an effective awareness drive.

She said the commission had been asked under the new policy to appoint at least 30 percent women as election officials. Polling centres should be opened near houses to enable women to cast their votes, she added.

The lawmaker said enough ballot papers should be provided to polling centres which should not be closed ahead of scheduled time as witnessed in the previous elections.

"Our demand is that polling stations should be opened near houses so that women feel secure," the legislator said.

The commission has been asked to ensure the votes polled for women candidates were not misused, Kofi said. The policy also stresses special arrangements for people with disabilities.

In response, Amarkhel promised the commission would do what it could to implement the policy. He said exclusive voter registration centres had been opened for women, but security problems, cultural restrictions and illiteracy barred them from enthusiastically taking part in process.

Amarkhel said 32 radio and 12 TV stations had been engaged in airing awareness programmes for women. He urged religious scholars, political parties and civil society to cooperate with the commission in making the process a success.

Link: <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/08/05/iec-handed-policy-women%E2%80%99s-role-polls>



Rowdiness hits Afghan Millat meeting

By [Muhammad Hasan Khitab](#) Aug 5, 2013 - 18:54

KABUL (*PAN*): A meeting of the Afghan Millat party on nominating a candidate for next year's presidential ballot was marred by rowdiness and physical clashes in Kabul on Monday.

Mohammad Amin, the Afghan Social Democratic Party leader, says his group is part and parcel of Afghan Millat Party. But others reject the claim, insisting Stana Gul Sherzad is their leader.

At the meeting, Amin declared himself a presidential wannabe and said: "We are ready for a political alliance with any individual or group that endorses our policy. The party has also named me as an independent runner."

Amin's remarks that no one would be allowed to misuse the party's name angered a number of participants. Organisers tried to expel his opponents from the meeting, but unruly scenes followed.

Afghan Millat Advisor Mohammad Wali said the meeting had been arranged as a show of support for the group. But the Social Democratic Party changed the agenda to the presidential election, he added.

A few months back, he recalled, majority of members chose Stana Gul Sherzad as their chief and Commerce Minister Anwarul Haq Ahady as honorary leader. "We would not allow divisions within the party..."

He claimed certain individuals were trying to arrange such meetings in an attempt to promote their political interest. His remarks triggered howls of protests from rivals and the two sides came to blows.

Link: <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/08/05/rowdiness-hits-afghan-millat-meeting>



Amarkhel reappointed as IEC secretary

By [Abasin Zaheer](#) Aug 6, 2013 - 14:37

KABUL ([PAN](#)): President Hamid Karzai on Tuesday reappointed Ziaul Haq Amarkhel as Independent Election Commission ([IEC](#)) secretary.

A spokesman for the Office of Administrative Affairs told Pajhwok Afghan News they had received presidential orders to the effect.

Mohammad Rafi Firdaus said the president had approved Amarkhel's second tenure on the basis of the recommendation from the commission members.

Under a recently-sanctioned law regarding the structure, authority and responsibilities of poll panels, the IEC secretary is to be appointed by the president in line with members' suggestion.

On Aug 3, Dr. Ahmad Yousaf Nuristani and Abdul Rahman Hotaki were elected respectively as Independent Election Commission ([IEC](#)) chairman and deputy chief on Saturday.

IEC member Sharifa Zurmati told Pajhwok Afghan News that Nuristani defeated Sareer Ahmad Barmak while Hotaki outpolled Qazi Suleman Hamid.

They replace Fazal Ahmad Manawi and Abdul Khaliq Hussaini. Also a former lawmaker, Zurmati said Gulalai Achakzai was elected as IEC secretary.

Link: <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/08/06/amarkhel-reappointed-iec-secretary>