



# VOTE.af

## Newsletter

Your weekly news update on the electoral process in Afghanistan

Aug 27 – Sept 03, 2015

---

“Under the relevant law, commissioners on the IEC are selected for a period of six years and nobody can sack them. But if someone tries to violate the law, it would be dangerous for the future of the country.”

---

### **Political issues should not affect polls: Nuristani**

**Mohammad Hassan Khettab, 26 August 2015**

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Independent Election Commission (IEC) chief on Wednesday said parliamentary elections had been postponed for at least a year due to political issues and warned that unconstitutionally removing the commission's members would endanger Afghanistan's future. Ahmad Yusuf Nuristani told reporters in Kabul the commission had chosen the month of April for the parliamentary and district council elections, but had to cancel the ballots due to political issues. Now that months had passed, he said, there remained no hope for a short-term political solution and the delay in holding the elections might take even more than a year. Nuristani said they had been ready to hold the elections as scheduled, but they were not allocated enough budget at the time. He said if the government provided them with financial resources and security, they were ready to conduct elections very soon. The IEC, he said, had repeatedly clarified that insecurity, interference by powerful individuals, lack of oversight by relevant organisations and some employees of the commission were of the main reasons behind electoral fraud in the previous elections. "As long as there is insecurity and lack of rule of law all over the country, it's hard to witness 100 percent standard elections," he remarked, urging the government to keep elections away from political matters and not delay further holding the elections. According to Nuristani, it was the commission's responsibility to set election dates. The government, he said, should prevent irresponsible comments from some individuals, respect the Constitution and avoid amending the electoral laws. "Under the relevant law, commissioners on the Independent Election Commission are selected for a period of six years and nobody can sack them. But if someone tries to violate the law, it would be dangerous for the future of the country," he cautioned. The Electoral Reform Commission embarked on its work three weeks back and is due to submit its first set of suggestions to the government. The suggestions may include sacking of some election commissioners. Nuristani said he would welcome the reform panels' suggestions only if the proposals were within the ambit of law, but beyond that would not be acceptable to the IEC. For reducing incidents of electoral fraud, he said, the IEC had taken into consideration some short-term technical reforms and had submitted their suggestions to President Ashraf Ghani in this regard. The suggestions presented to the president concerned preparing of voter lists, preventing fraud through fake voter cards, preventing multiple voting, improving monitoring and discarding extra voter cards, he elaborated. The top electoral official said reducing election costs also were among other reforms

they had taken into consideration. The costs would be reduced from \$117 million to \$63 million, he added. About the cut in foreign aid to the commission, he said: "It is the responsibility of the government to arrange funds for holding elections. We expect foreigners to respect the Afghan laws and not to interfere in our domestic matters."

### **Disgruntled reform panel members submit own proposals**

**Mohammad Hassan Khettab, 31 August 2015**

KABUL (Pajhwok): Two protesting members of the Electoral Reform Commission have submitted their own set of suggestions to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), an official said on Monday. The two, Kawoon Kakar and Shah Mahmood Miakhail, announced boycotting the panel's meetings on Saturday over what they said their other colleagues wanted to allocate 100 of the Wolesi Jirga's 249 seats to political groups. Javed Faisal, deputy CEO spokesman, told Pajhwok Afghan News the commission members presented their suggestions to the CEO on Sunday, when the two protesting members were also present and they submitted their own separate proposals. Faisal said all the suggestions would be evaluated by the CEO and the government would act in accordance with the law. He said electoral reforms remained the government's top priority and commended the reform panel's performance during the past one month. He said the government would try to plan how to implement these suggestions and specify a date for the next parliamentary elections. Earlier, Ahmad Yusuf Nuristani, the Independent Election Commission (IEC) chief, had said political differences and lack of budget led to the postponement of the parliamentary vote for indefinite time. Asking the government to keep political wrangling away from elections, Nuristani said if the Electoral Reform Commission's decisions were not in line with the law, they wouldn't be acceptable to the IEC.

### **Cabinet decision on ID cards unchanged: CEO**

**Ahmad Qureshi, 30 August 2015**

KABUL (Pajhwok): Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Abdullah Abdullah on Sunday said the Council of Ministers decision about the issuance of electronic identity cards remained unchanged and would be implemented. Abdullah, while talking to Electoral Reform Commission members, stressed the importance of electronic IDs for transparent elections. He reiterated that no changes had been brought to the cabinet's decision regarding the ID cards. "Some people came to me with different views. We listened to them but we will act based on the law," he said, adding the distribution of the new ID cards would help resolve major problems concerning elections. "We are hopeful that this programme starts very soon," Abdullah said without specifying any date.

“Most members of our commission (ERC) are associated with specific groups and are enthusiastic to hurriedly take a decision that serves the interest of these groups.”



Above: The IEC chief and members at a presser. Kabul, Afghanistan.

### Reform panel wants 100 parliament seats given to parties

Halim Karimi, 29 August 2015

KABUL (Pajhwok): Two members of the Electoral Reform Commission on Saturday announced boycotting the panel's meetings over what they said their other colleagues wanted to allocate 100 of the Wolesi Jirga's 249 seats to political groups. The two --- Kawon Kakar and Shah Mehmood Miakhel --- feared political groups with enough resources and gunmen would be able to grab the seats. Miakhel said: "Most members of our commission are associated with specific groups and are enthusiastic to hurriedly take a decision that serves the interest of these groups by taking advantage of summer vacations of the parliament." The two thanked the unity government for showing trust in them by appointing them as members of the Electoral Reform Commission to protect the national interests. "During the past five weeks, which is too much little time for the huge responsibility, we held gatherings and made trips to provinces for the sake of reforms in the electoral system and presenting the government a comprehensive reform strategy that is practicable in the face of ground realities and challenges," they said. Miakhel said they wanted a strategy that was acceptable to the majority of people and did not hurt a particular tribe or group. The two Electoral Reform Commission members also handed over a copy of their suggestions and demands to media persons. They said as part of their job they held talks with people from various walks of life at centres of major provinces and also consulted national and international groups who had experience in elections. They said people's trust in elections and the electoral regime had eroded and reforms which could restore their trust should be introduced. They said people in provinces wanted electoral constituencies to be made smaller and Afghanistan be divided into 250 constituencies in line with the Constitution in order every constituency has a member in the parliament. These demands were common in Nangarhar, Paktia, Kabul, Ghazni, Kandahar, Herat and Kunduz provinces, the two Electoral Reform Commission members said in their copy of suggestions and people's demands. They also quoted people as demanding a halt to the use of fake voter cards and prevention of fraud during elections. Their proposals say

the current electoral system technically called "single non-transferable vote or SNTV" should be reviewed because the contact between people and their representatives has been weak in the system. They said most of the people in the zones demanded cut in election costs both for the government and candidates and called for a strategy in this regard. In order to reach these goals, Kakar and Miakhel said they had worked on the electoral law and the composition, authority and duties of the electoral bodies and fully supported notions aimed at strengthening the independence of the election commission and preventing irregularities and electoral fraud. "But there were sharp differences and disagreements over an electoral system which is enforceable under the current Afghanistan's situation that it should inclusive, direct and fair for the people across the country." They said they had been insisting that national political parties should be gradually and naturally empowered not by giving them privileges because groups with resources and gunmen did not offer themselves for accountability. They said political groups did not abide by democratic principles and everything was being controlled by their leaders and their aides while their sources of income remained unknown. The two warned if the unity government accepted decisions of the Electoral Reform Commission, the move would serve a huge blow to the democratic process and would threaten the country's stability. However, deputy head of the commission, Sediqullah Tawhidi, told Pajhwok Afghan News they would present before the government recommendations which had been prepared in consultations with people. He said these recommendations would be presented to Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah on Saturday afternoon and the CEO would forward them to the president. However, he did not explain the proposals. But Kawon Kakar and Miakhel said the Electoral Reform Commission wanted to replace the SNTV system with Parallel Proportion System in order to give political parties 100 or 40 percent parliament seats. Another proposal is that Afghanistan should be one constituency for political parties. In such a system, two kinds of list are prepared one called open and the second closed lists. If the lists are open and 100 seats are given to political parties and if the parties are 50 then the number of their candidates will reach 5,000 and the voter lists will be composed in a book shape. Kakar and Miakhel said if the closed lists were endorsed,

“But there were sharp differences over an electoral system which is enforceable under the current Afghanistan’s situation.”

political groups would appoint their preferred individuals. They said seats of permanent candidates should also be divided among constituencies and the constituency system for Kuchi tribesman should remain the same. Only

those parties can win these seats who obtain four in 100 percent votes across Afghanistan. They said political groups could directly field their candidates and could form majority in parliament.



Above: Two members of Electoral Reforms Commission at a presser after boycotting panel's meetings.

### Poll watchdogs doubt reforms' implementation

Halim Karimi, 31 August 2015

KABUL (Pajhwok): Election watchdogs on Monday welcomed the Electoral Reform Commission (ERC)'s suggestions about reforms in the electoral system, but called their implementation as difficult in the current circumstances. Mohamamd Naeem Ayoubzada, the Transparent Election Foundation of Afghanistan (TEFA) chief, told Pajhwok Afghan News they welcomed the ERC's suggestions, although incomplete and had their own flaws. He said two suggestions about rearrangement of voter lists and distribution of computerised identity cards seemed not possible to be materialised in a short time. The TEFA chief said if the government was not in a position to distribute the computerised identity cards then it should come with an alternate plan to make the upcoming elections transparent. Mohammad Yusuf Rashid, the Free and Fair Election Foundation of Afghanistan (FEFA) head, praised the ERC work and said the commission had been able to meet its task in a short span of time. He said the ERC suggestions were mostly positive and their implementation would help execute transparent elections in the country. Rashid expressed his concern over the decreased number of commissioners on electoral bodies, saying every commissioner had his own responsibilities and the move raised questions that who would discharge the duty of the removed officials. The reform panel, after month-long discussions with political parties, civil society activists and people of the all zones, submitted its proposals to Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah on Sunday. Some of the major suggestions include registration of voters, making the election bodies accountable, the presence of two

foreigners in the Independent Election Complaints Commission (IECC), reservation of one seat at the Wolesi Jirga for Hindu minority, identification and shrinking of the constituencies. Other proposals include distribution of the computerised Identity cards, a 25 percent representation of women in provincial and district councils and invalidation of the current voter cards. The ERC has also suggested that the number of Independent Election Commission (IEC) commissioners should be reduced from the current nine to seven and the IECC members from seven to five. Rashid said preferring specialization over education was helpful and giving 25 percent representation to women in the provincial councils was another positive proposal. But he said there existed some issues in the draft proposals which could raise concerns and their implementation could create problems. Switching to the parallel voting from the non-transferable vote system would be better but it was not implementable due to the short time in the lead up to the Wolesi Jirga elections, he said. Meanwhile, Afghanistan Democracy Watch (ADW) head Zikerya Barakzai also said the parallel voting had positive aspects. But he said it was hard to implement the system because all political parties would be required to provide a list of their 80 members which was not possible. According to Barakzai, the registration of voters in a particular polling station before elections would be an expensive exercise which might not be implementable. He said the permanent status of IECC was a waste of money and resources because the IECC had no duty when there was no election. He believed creating constituencies in line with the population was not possible because this required the exact number of population which was not available.

---

“We welcome the reforms commission’s suggestions, although incomplete and had their own flaws.”

---



Above: Mohammad Naeem Ayoubzada, TEFA chief at a presser.

### 60pc of Charikar voters enthusiastic about future polls

Ahmad Qureshi, 26 August 2015

KABUL (Pajhwok): A survey shows every six in 10 persons in Charikar, the capital of central Parwan province, are enthusiastic about their participation in the delayed parliamentary and district council elections. The survey has been conducted by students of journalism with the help of PAYK, an investigative journalism organization. Around 150 individuals from different walks of life were interviewed in the survey. Of the participants, 60 percent -- 53.3 percent men and 47.7 percent women -- vowed they would take part in the coming ballots. In addition, 42.2 percent of these individuals showed strong interest in casting their votes, while 40 percent said they would go to vote to elect candidates of their choice and 17.8 percent said they wanted to vote in order to get their problems resolved. Another 40 percent of those interviewed ----71.7 percent of them men and 28.8 percent women ----showed no interest in voting saying they had no belief in elections and the electoral system. Similarly, 40 percent rejected taking part in elections citing flaws in the system and 7.5 percent did not want to vote because of security concerns. About 95 percent termed cultural restrictions, undemocratic practices and the lack of awareness about elections as main reasons behind women's lukewarm participation in elections. They asked security officials to take steps to improve security especially during elections. Charikar's population is estimated at 642,000 people. According to the provincial Independent Election Commission (IEC) office, 54,000 men and 24,000 women are eligible for vote in the city. Police Chief Mohammad Zaman Mamozai said police would leave no stone unturned to maintain law and order during the upcoming elections. He said police in the last presidential and provincial council elections had proved their capability of meeting all challenges. Election officials say they would bring into use all resources in hand to ensure that public fearlessly took part in elections. Abdul Qahar Wahab Safi, IEC head for Parwan, said they had launched an awareness programme to help the public enhance their knowledge about elections. However, the election commission has postponed the parliamentary and district council elections for at least a year citing a lack of budget. IEC chief Yusuf Nuristani on Wednesday told reporters in Kabul that the commission was ready to

conduct the elections if the government arranged the costs.

### Balkh PC links growing insecurity, graft to cracks within govt

Zabihullah Ehsas, 27 August 2015

MAZAR-I-SHARIF (Pajhwok): The provincial council head in northern Balkh province on Thursday said differences within government leaders was a major reason behind spike in graft and insecurity across the country. Mohammad Ibrahim Khair Andesh, provincial council head, told Pajhwok Afghan News law and order was deteriorating at accelerated pace amid rampant corruption in government departments. He was of the opinion that still no serious efforts have been taken otherwise the two main challenges could be curbed. For a country like Afghanistan, he said, security was the utmost priority. "Officials that are responsible for fighting corruption and bringing security are themselves creating problems," he added. Khair Andesh said if differences among government leaders deepened, they would lose the masses' trust which would lead to further chaos. He said at this situation people had also become disappointed with the government and did not have much hopes as much as they had in the beginning. Now, he said, people expected the government leaders to come to terms with each other and not to have difference over major issues of national importance. According to Khair Andesh, people's biggest expectation was security and it could only be achieved if the government leaders put aside their differences. He said at such critical situations the people also needed to stand behind the government.

### Contact Us

Pajhwok Afghan News operates VOTE.af: a free and neutral website for news, photos, videos, op-eds, and information related to governance and the elections in Afghanistan.

Subscribe to our weekly newsletter in Dari, Pashto, or English:

Email [marketing@pajhwok.com](mailto:marketing@pajhwok.com)

Telephone: +93 (0) 20 220 1814 or +93 (0) 20 220 1915