



THE UN AND THE AFGHAN ELECTIONS

The **20 August 2009** presidential and provincial council elections are being organized by Afghanistan's Independent Election Commission (IEC). <http://www.iec.org.af/>

While the elections are Afghan-led and organized, the international community is providing funding and technical support plus support from the international military for Afghanistan's security institutions. Observation groups include those from the European Union, from Japan, and from several regional and international NGOs.

The support of the international community is mobilized and coordinated by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) [http://unama.unmissions.org/default.aspx/?/](http://unama.unmissions.org/default.aspx?/) and the UNDP/ELECT project <http://www.afghanelections.org/>.

UNDP/ELECT is the primary vehicle through which the international community supports elections in Afghanistan. Working closely with electoral bodies such as the Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan, UNDP/ELECT provides project and program design and management, mobilization of donor funding, activity coordination, the channeling of funds for electoral support, and reporting.

UNAMA provides a crucial link between members of the international community and Afghans on the ground. It coordinates international efforts and ascertains that all parties are playing by the rules of the game.

UNAMA has issued guidelines for the conduct of all those who are engaged in the elections – government officials, candidates, supporters, electoral officials and media and international representatives – related to the election campaign, the election day and the immediate post-election day process.

To support the massive logistical operation for the elections, the IEC and UNDP/ELECT have formulated a two-step plan: delivery of election materials from Kabul to the provinces; then delivery from the provinces to the districts. Some 17 million ballot papers and 100,000 ballot boxes have been delivered across the country.

Afghanistan held its first post-war democratic elections five years ago. In 2004, Hamid Karzai was elected President for a five-year term. Afghanistan has some 15.6 million registered voters, about half the country's population. Some 40 candidates are running for president, including two women. More than 3,000 Afghans are competing for seats in 34 provinces.

The 2004 elections enjoyed a 70 percent turnout. For the 2009 elections it appears likely that turnout will be low in insecure areas, particularly in the South and East. Nonetheless, the aim is to make these elections as widely inclusive as possible.

On 9 August, the top United Nations envoy in Afghanistan, Kai Eide (Special Representative of the Secretary-General,) said he was concerned that the insecurity around the country will affect the turn-out of voters.

He called on all Afghans to help: "Don't block the road for Afghans, male or female, who want to do what the Constitution entitles that person to do."

Also on 9 August, UNAMA and the Afghan Human Rights Commission issued the latest joint monitoring report on the status of the political rights of candidates, voters and electoral workers during the campaign period from 16 June to 1 August. The report noted an "upward trend" in the incidence of intimidation by anti-government elements during the election campaign period, as well as intimidation committed by rival candidates and their supporters.

The report also noted that government officials were using state resources to influence the elections in favor of the incumbent.

In July, SRS G Eide told the Security Council that the August election is about more than choosing the country's leaders "It is about strengthening people's confidence in the democratic process, and about strengthening Afghanistan's institutions. It is not only about who will lead, but about the legitimacy of leadership."

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