PRESS RELEASE
COUNTING OF THE BALLOTS AT PROVINCIAL LEVEL
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Ballots cast in the September 18 Wolesi Jirga and Provincial Council elections will be counted at provincial level in one count centre per province, the Joint Electoral Management Body announced Thursday.

The JEMB carefully considered various options for the count and consulted widely with interested stakeholders on what would be the best approach.

A provincial level count will make it possible to mix ballots from different communities throughout the province and thereby protect the secrecy of the vote, not only for the individual, but also for communities as a whole.

International and Afghan security institutions have confirmed that they will be able to assist with securing one count centre per province. With an anticipated 6,000 different polling locations, it would have been difficult to provide sufficient security for counting in each of these polling centres immediately after the close of polling.

"We have noted the concerns of some political parties and candidates with regards to the transportation of the ballots from the polling centres to the Provincial Counting Centres. We will ensure that multiple safeguards are in place to guarantee the safety of the ballot boxes," JEMB Chairman Bissmillah Bissmil said.

"One such safeguard will be close coordination with observation groups to ensure that both observers and party and candidate agents have the opportunity to accompany the convoys carrying ballot boxes to the count centre."

Further to this, the JEMB will take every possible measure to ensure the credibility of the counting process. This will include the opportunity for observers along with party and candidate agents to oversee the ballot boxes at all times, even during the night.

Counting is expected to commence on September 20, two days after polling, and will take around three weeks.

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