



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: THE INDEPENDENT ELECTION COMMISSION (IEC)

What is the Independent Election Commission (IEC)?

Established in 2006, Afghanistan's Independent Election Commission (IEC) is Constitutionally-mandated to administer and supervise all types of elections and referenda (Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Article 156). It is the only institution with this responsibility and its duties and functions are detailed in the Law on Structures, Duties and Authorities of the Independent Election Commission and the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission, passed by the National Assembly and endorsed by President Karzai in July, 2013. The IEC will plan and conduct Presidential and Provincial Council Elections in 2014, and Parliamentary Elections in 2015.

How is the IEC Board of Commissioners selected?

In accord with Article 8 in the aforementioned law, the IEC Board of Commissioners is appointed by the President, and chosen from a short-list of 27 candidates, provided by a Selection Committee (comprising representatives from the National Assembly known as the *Wolesi Jirga* and *Meshrano Jirga*, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Head of the Independent Commission for Oversight of the Implementation of the Constitution, Head of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission and one representative chosen from amongst civil society organizations related to elections). Of the nine-member Commission, at least two must be women. In the current Commission, appointed in August 2013, there are three female Commissioners.

How is the IEC structured?

The Board of Commissioners is a permanent body, consisting of nine members appointed to a six-year term. The Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson and Secretary, who are elected from amongst the Commission members for three years, can be endorsed for another three years. The Board of Commissioners is responsible for the overall policy making; the adoption of measures to ensure the credibility of the elections; and oversight of the IEC Secretariat, which implements the technical and operational aspects of the electoral process.

Administrative and operational functions are managed by the IEC Secretariat, under the direction of a Chief Electoral Officer. There are 10 departments at the national headquarters in Kabul: Legal; Field Operations; Planning and Procedures; Logistics; Administration and Finance; Human Resources; Training and Capacity Building; Communication and Information Technology; Public Outreach; and External Relations. These departments are complemented by a Gender Unit; Geographic Information Systems Unit; and Monitoring and Evaluation Unit. The Secretariat has 8 regional offices and 34 provincial offices, headed by Provincial Electoral Officers.

How can voters be confident in the independence, impartiality and integrity of the IEC and its staff?

The IEC is Constitutionally-mandated as an independent body, and as such, members of the IEC Board of Commissioners, the Secretariat, and temporary staff are required to sign the Code of Conduct for



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Electoral Staff, committing themselves to carry out their electoral responsibilities impartially, transparently, and with respect for the rights of all eligible voters.

Breaches of contract have serious repercussions. In the case that an Afghan government official is found to have interfered or exerted influence over electoral affairs, the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission may request his or her dismissal or punishment by the relevant authority (Electoral Law, Article 66). Approximately 11,000 former election staff members have been prohibited from employment at the IEC, due to their misconduct in past elections.

In addition to their professional obligations, election staff members are also responsible to their fellow citizens and subject to the laws of Afghanistan. Substantive technical mechanisms are in place to ensure that votes cannot be tampered with, and the manner in which IEC and electoral staff members carry out their electoral duties may be detailed in reports by domestic and international observers, candidate and political party agents, as well as the media. In the case that an official complaint is brought to the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission (IECC), the individuals in question – regardless whether they are permanent IEC staff, temporary polling staff, or any other individual or group – will be subject to investigation and held to account accordingly.