



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: ELECTION OBSERVERS AND AGENTS

What are the roles of election observers and agents?

Accredited election observers and political party or candidate agents seek to ensure that the entire electoral process is conducted in accordance with Afghan law, election regulations and international commitments undertaken by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GoIRA), such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which the GoIRA is a signatory.

Provided that their actions do not disrupt the electoral process, all accredited observers and agents are entitled to: observe all stages of the electoral process; access information related to the electoral process; publish reports and share them with the IEC, government, UN agencies and media.

Observation reinforces transparency and accountability of the electoral process, and thereby enhances public confidence in the electoral process.

What is the difference between an observer and an agent?

Election observers represent domestic and international election observer organizations, and are expected to conduct themselves impartially. They observe the electoral process and may submit final reports, detailing the manner in which elections are conducted, including any shortcomings or infractions of respective laws, regulations and international principles for democratic elections. While they must refrain from interfering in the electoral process, they are entitled to record any incidents for inclusion in their official reports, share their reports publicly, and lodge official complaints through the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission (IECC).

Agents represent political parties or independent candidates. Aside from reporting whether elections are conducted in accord with national laws and international principles for democratic elections, agents can protect the interests of their respective candidates. They may object to a person's entitlement to vote in the case that the voter does not have a valid voter card, is using a card that is not their own, or has already voted. Agents may also raise questions with regard to the violation of laws or regulations directly with IEC officials, or they may lodge an official complaint to the IECC for further investigation.

How are observers and agents accredited?

Observer groups, candidates and political parties intending to send representatives to election sites must apply for accreditation as "entities," and register each of their members. All relevant application forms are available online at www.iec.org.af; or may be collected, in person, from the IEC headquarters in Kabul or in any provincial IEC office, from Saturday to Wednesday, from 8am to 4pm; and on Thursday from 8am to 1pm. Applications for accreditation of entities must be received **at least 2 weeks prior** to Election Day. Applications for accreditation of individuals must be received **at least 1 week prior** to Election Day. For more information, IEC Accreditation Officer, Mr. Sikandar Dawran may be contacted, directly via email at sikandar.dawran@iec.org.af or via telephone at +93 (0) 799 156 211.



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Are there limits to the movements and activities of observers or agents?

The movements of observers are not restricted, and they are not assigned to specific polling centers. They may go wherever they choose and speak with whomever they choose, provided that they do not interfere with the electoral process.

As a way to ensure balanced distribution of agents, they have been asked to inform the IEC of their intended locations. This way, the IEC will be aware of any potential imbalances and can encourage wider and more balanced observation coverage by agents.

All limitations to observers and agents have been established with a view to protect the rights of voters and preserve the integrity of the electoral process. Observers and agents may not:

- Interfere with the electoral process, the right of voters to choose, or the secrecy of any vote;
- Remove or obscure information that could infringe on the privacy of voters;
- Handle any polling or counting materials;
- Speak directly with voters or those assisting voters; or
- Campaign in any way.

Only female agents and observers may enter areas reserved for women voters and, to prevent overcrowding, election officials may limit the number of agents and observers present in a polling station at any time.

Moreover, the IEC reserves the right to revoke the accreditation of any entity or individual who violates the Electoral Law, decisions of the IEC or IECC; whose party, candidate or organization requests the cancelation of his or her accreditation; or in the case of the dissolution or withdrawal of his or her party or candidate.