



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: RUN-OFF ELECTION

What is a run-off election and why is it necessary?

According to Afghan Electoral Law, in order to be elected President, a candidate must receive an absolute majority of votes. Effectively, the winning candidate must have won more than half (50% + 1 vote) of the valid ballots cast in the election. If neither candidate has received more than half (50% + 1 vote) of the valid ballots cast, a “run-off” (second) election will be held.

Only the two candidates who received the most votes in the first election will compete in the run-off election. Of these two, the candidate who wins the most votes in the run-off election will be declared President. (Article 20)

On 5 April 2014, Afghanistan held Presidential and Provincial Council Elections. Based on counting and tally of election results by the Independent Election Commission (IEC) at the National Tally Center and advice received from the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission (IECC), none of the 8 Presidential candidates won an absolute majority of votes. As a result, the IEC is now legally-obliged to conduct a run-off election.

When will the 2014 Presidential Run-Off Election be held?

The IEC has planned to conduct a run-off election on 14 June 2014; and the electoral calendar is as follows:

Date	Event
15 May	Announcement of Presidential Run-Off Election
22 May – 11 June	Candidate Campaign Period
17 May – 22 May	Movement of Election Material to Provinces
21 May – 21 June	Public Outreach Campaign Period
25 May – 13 June	Movement of Material to Districts
12 – 13 June	Campaign Silence Period
14 June	Presidential Run-Off Election Day
14 June	Ballot Counting at Polling Stations
15 June – 21 June	Retrieval of Tamper-Evident Bags to Headquarters
15 June – 28 June	Results Tally Process
2 July	Announcement of Preliminary Presidential Run-Off Election Results
3 – 4 July	Electoral Complaints Period
5 – 15 July	Adjudication of Electoral Complaints by the IECC
16 July	Submission of Final Decisions of the IECC to the IEC
22 July	Announcement of Final Results of the Presidential Run-Off Election
22 August	Commencement of the New Presidential Term

What measures are being taken to improve voting procedures?

1. Increased number of polling stations planned
Drawing on voter trends, as seen in the 5 April election, the IEC can better anticipate where turnout will be greatest, and where additional polling stations are likely to be required. The number of polling stations planned has therefore been increased (from 20,561 polling stations in the first round) to 23,313 for the run-off election.
2. Greater volume of contingency voting materials
A voting material contingency of 5% (519 polling station kits at the IEC Headquarters and 1,168 at provincial offices) means that, if necessary, the IEC is prepared to open as many as 24,481 polling stations. These improvements are designed to reduce the average number of voters per polling station and, by extension, reduce the time required by each voter to queue before casting his or her ballot.
3. Replacement staff implicated in fraud or irregularities, and staff who performed poorly
More than 3,300 members of the election staff employed 525 polling stations on 5 April were implicated in acts of fraud or irregularities. These staff members will be strictly prohibited from employment as electoral staff in the run-off or in other future elections, and may also be referred to the Attorney General's Office. Another 440 staff members, including several District Field Coordinators, will not be rehired as a result of poor performance. These measure are intended to reduce attempts to undermine the electoral process and better preserve the integrity of results.

What measures are in place to improve the security of voters?

The MOI and Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) were critical partners in facilitating Election Day activities on 5 April. Assessments conducted by the MOI helped to identify and reduce security risks. The presence of ANSF throughout Afghanistan, prior to and during elections, helped facilitate the participation of an approximate 7 million voters. Having benefited from this experience and gained additional knowledge that can be applied to their operations, the IEC and MOI will continue to prioritize the safety of Afghan voters; and the presence of ANSF will remain consistent throughout the run-off election.

Security procedures will be implemented in all election facilities. Every voter will be searched before he or she may enter a polling center. Weapons or any items that might be used as weapons will not be allowed inside or within 500 meters of a polling center, unless authorized by the Ministry of Interior.

Afghan citizens, communities, religious leaders, media and political actors should also encourage civil responsibility and discourage unlawful behavior. All Afghans should report incidents of threat, intimidation or other actions that are unlawful, or which compromise the integrity of the electoral process.

Can a registered voter participate in the run-off election, even if he or she did not participate in the original Presidential Election on 5 April?

Any eligible voter who possesses a voter identification card may participate in the run-off election, regardless of whether he or she has participated in any other election.

Must voters participate in the run-off election if they plan to vote for the same candidate as before?

Votes cast on 5 April or in any other election will not be counted toward the result of the run-off. Voters must therefore participate in the run-off election in order to indicate their support of a particular candidate – even if he or she has already done so in the first election. Moreover, only ballots for one of the two top candidates will be considered valid. Therefore, in the case that a voter’s preferred candidate is no longer in the Presidential race, he or she is advised to support an alternate candidate.

Can returning voters select a different candidate than they did in the 5 April election?

Voters are legally-entitled to support any candidate of their choice, regardless of the ballots they have cast in other elections. Their vote is secret and cast in privacy; and voters are not obliged to reveal their preferred candidate to any other person.

Will newly-eligible voters be able to register, prior to the run-off election?

Due to time limitations, there will be no new voters registered before the run-off.

Will accreditation cards issued for the 5 April election remain valid for the run-off; or will new cards be required?

All IEC-accredited media and election observers should retain their original 2014 accreditation cards; and will be facilitated to enter into the various premises and fora in which electoral activities are conducted. However, the accreditation cards of candidate agents will no longer be valid.

Only agents representing one of the two competing Presidential candidates will be accredited for the run-off. To this end, each candidate will receive an approximate 25,000 blank accreditation cards. Each candidate will complete the blank cards by inserting the names of their agents and attaching their photographs (except in the case of female agents). The candidate must then return the completed cards to the IEC, where they will be verified and stamped, to reflect IEC-approval and confirm the official accreditation of each individual candidate agent. Candidates are also furnished with a complete polling center list, which they may use to assign their agents and balance their presence.

What are the procedures for voting in the run-off election?

All eligible voters who possess voter cards may cast their ballots at any polling station and at any time between 7am and 4pm. Before entering the polling center, voters will be required to present their voter card to a Queue Controller. The Queue Controller will examine the voter card to see that it has not already been punched (with a distinctively-shaped hole representing the run-off election). The Queue Controller will also examine the voter’s fingers to confirm that ink has not already been applied.

Inside the polling station, the voter will be directed to the Identification and Inking Officer, who will again check their voter card before punching it with a small distinctively-shaped hole. The number on his or her voter card will be recorded, and the voter’s right index finger will be inked, using indelible ink.

A Ballot Issuer will then provide the voter with a ballot, marked with a unique stamp on the back, indicating that it is an official IEC-issued election ballot.

The voter may then enter the polling booth. A secret vote is fundamental to democratic elections; and every voter casts his or her ballot in a private booth where ballots are not visible to others. Using a pen, the voter will mark the ballot once, in the empty square beside the name of the candidate he or she wishes to support. The voter may choose only one candidate. Ballots that are marked more than once, or on

which the selection is not clear, will be considered invalid. After marking the ballots, he or she should fold the ballot so that only the blank side of the ballot can be seen. The voter should then leave the polling booth and move toward the ballot box area.

The Ballot Box Controller ensures that all ballots have been stamped and that every voter places only one ballot in the ballot box. After casting his or her ballot, the voter exits the station.

After they have voted, every voter should keep and safeguard their voter card, as it will be required for participation in future elections.

Can a man vote on behalf of his female family members?

The Afghan Constitution guarantees equal opportunities for men and women. This includes the right to vote and to be elected. Therefore, proxy voting is not allowed in Afghanistan. Each voter must cast his or her own ballot individually. This protects the sovereign right of every eligible Afghan to vote, whether male or female. It also ensures that ballots reflect the choice of the voter and not the choice of someone else.

What provisions will be made to accommodate female voters?

As in the 5 April election, roughly 40% of polling stations will be restricted to female voters. Female voters will be facilitated by female polling staff; and female safety-searches will be conducted by female security staff. With a view to encourage greater female participation in electoral activities, the IEC encourages – but will not oblige – female Presidential candidate agents to include their photograph on their accreditation cards.

Are there provisions to accommodate voters who are confined to hospitals or detained in prison?

Mobile voting teams will accommodate voters in major national hospitals and prisons.

Can eligible Afghan voters cast ballots from outside of their country?

According to the Electoral Law, Afghan refugees and diplomats retain the right to participate in elections, if possible for the IEC to accommodate. However, due to its cost and scale of operations required, the Independent Election Commission is not yet able to provide this service to out-of-country voters.

Can the IEC guarantee the safety of voters participating in run-off election activities?

Participating in democratic elections is important. It is the sovereign right of all eligible Afghan voters to participate in elections, and choose their elected officials according to their respective policies. In addition, voting is a way to contribute to a peaceful democratic transition. However, voters should avoid any situation that they consider to be a risk to personal security.