



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: VOTING IN THE 2014 ELECTIONS

Why is it important for Afghans to vote?

Democratic elections are important because they enable citizens to determine who should lead their country. Voting is a sovereign right; and participating in elections is a way to express political views and opinions at the ballot box, and affect political change in a way that is not violent.

The 2014 Presidential Election is an opportunity for Afghanistan to manage its first peaceful, democratic transfer of power. It represents both the will and the ability of Afghans to determine their political future.

Provincial Elections are also important. Provincial Councils listen to the interest and concerns of the people in their provinces and make decisions that directly affect provincial development.

Who is eligible to vote in Afghanistan?

Voting is the sovereign right of any Afghan citizen who is 18 years or older, who has registered to vote, possesses a voter card, and has not been deprived, by law, of his or her civil rights.

When and where do voters go to cast their ballots?

Presidential and Provincial Council Elections will take place on 5 April 2014. In an effort to encourage the broadest and most inclusive participation, there will be some 6,775 polling centers, comprising 21,663 polling stations, throughout Afghanistan on Election Day. Eligible voters who possess voter cards may cast their ballots anytime between 7am and 4pm. Ballots for the Presidential Election may be cast at any polling center, nationwide. However, ballots for the Provincial Council Election must be cast at a polling center in the voter's province of residence.

Kuchi populations can cast their ballots in any province. As all voters, however, they shall be able to cast only one ballot for their choice of Presidential candidate and one ballot for their choice of Provincial Council candidate.

How do voters cast ballots? What is the proper procedure for voting?

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, and the voter's finger to confirm that ink has not already been applied, as measures against multiple voting.

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 two of the voter's fingers will be inked, using indelible ink on one finger and invisible ink on the other.

A Ballot Issuer will then give the voter one or two ballots, depending on whether the voter wishes to participate in both the Presidential and Provincial Council elections or just one electoral contest. The



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voter will receive a blue ballot to vote for a Presidential candidate, and a green ballot to vote for a Provincial Council candidate. Ballots will be marked with a unique stamp on the back, indicating that they are official.

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 each ballot once, in the empty square beside the name of the candidate he or she wishes to support. The voter may choose one Presidential candidate (indicating their choice on the blue ballot) and one Provincial Council candidate (indicating their choice on the green ballot). 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.

At the ballot boxes, the voter should cast only one ballot for each electoral contest (Presidential and/or Provincial Council Election). The Ballot Box Controller ensures that all ballots have been stamped and that the voter places no more than one ballot for each election in the respective ballot box. The voter then 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?

Every polling center will include separate polling stations for men and women, and the IEC is currently recruiting and training female polling staff. The Ministry of Interior is also making every effort to ensure that sufficient female security staff is ready for Election Day. More than 13,000 female searchers are to be recruited, trained and deployed to accommodate every female polling station.

Are there provisions for *Kuchi* voters (whose place of residence is not permanent)?

Kuchi populations can cast their ballots in any province. However, as all voters, they shall be able to cast only one ballot for their choice of Presidential candidate and one ballot for their choice of Provincial Council candidate.

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.



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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, for these elections, 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.