



PRESS STATEMENT

INDEPENDENT COMMITTEE ON ELECTION MONITORING

Wednesday, November 9, 2005 11:00AM

Free, fair and transparent elections are the basis for any meaningful democracy. The Independent Committee for Election Monitoring (ICEM) has recruited, trained and is deploying a total of 5,000 observers from 16 NGOs to observe the voting process for the Parliamentary election. ICEM is aimed at providing the integrity and the credibility of the election process. In the first round of election, ICEM has deployed 1,586 observers to monitor the voting and counting procedures in 10,644 polling subcommittees distributed in 3,061 polling centers in which a total of 10,752,458 voters are assigned to vote.

In general, ICEM welcomes and highly appreciates the cooperation offered by state security services throughout the day to ensure the safety and security of election monitors.

ICEM observers also welcome the use of transparent ballot boxes.

Authorities' Arbitrary Decisions Continue to Seriously Damage the Transparency of the Election

Ministry's of Justice decision made only few hours before the polls opened on Wednesday to allow access to the polling stations only to NGOs that are registered through the Ministry of Social Affairs seriously undermines the citizens' right to monitor and scrutinize the voting process. ICEM views that this decision undermines the freedom and independence of civic organizations in Egypt. The last-minute decisions only prove the authorities' policy and intent to conceal information and generate confusion.

In addition, authorities' intentional failure to make public detailed election-day procedures and any information concerning voters' lists, polling subcommittees and polling centers location critically affects the integrity and the transparency of the election process.

Pre Election Day Assessment

On Tuesday, November 8, ICEM observers have been deployed to their polling subcommittees in order to assess the preparedness of the polling centers to conduct the voting and accommodate voters. Yesterday, ICEM observers reported the following:

- **In Beni Suef and Cairo official ballots have been taken out from the polling stations and are being circulated and distributed to voters marked for NDP candidates. ICEM views this as an illegal activity that questions the overall fairness and legality of the election outcome.**
- Majority of the polling centers have been marked properly as the polling facilities;
- Majority of the polling centers are accessible to voters;
- Majority of the observers have reported that no preparatory work in terms of setting up the polling centers has been done.
- Majority of the polling facilities were still displaying campaign materials supporting different candidates, both position and opposition.

Election Day Monitoring: The Opening of the Polls

All ICEM observers have been deployed since early morning to their designated areas of responsibility and voting facilities in order to monitor the opening of the polls.

ICEM Observers Expelled and Threatened at Gunpoint

In Giza, El-Saf district, El-Aquez school, three ICEM observers were expelled and threatened at gunpoint by police officers not to show up again at the polling center. The jacket and the ID of one of the three have been confiscated by an identified group of people in civilian clothes.

In Giza, El-Badrashin district, police official closed the El-Badrashin school which is used as the polling centers and stopped the voting process.

ICEM strongly condemns all these acts against its observers and views these as the violation of basic human rights. ICEM observers continue to carry out their work, which they consider a duty to Egypt and its citizens. ICEM calls on all the government authorities to enable and assist election monitors to perform their duties aimed at ensuring the fairness and freedom of the election.

ICEM Observers Apprehended and Interrogated, and not allowed to monitor

The vast majority of observers were denied access to the polling stations to monitor the opening procedures. In addition, around 25% of the polling stations where ICEM has fielded observers have not been allowed access to the polling station when the voting commenced.

In Cairo, El-Gamaleia district, El-Hussein school, the officials expelled ICEM observers from the polling station when the NDP candidate came in to cast his ballot accompanied with a number of his supporters that were allowed to vote as well.

In El-Wadi Gedid, El-Harga district, Nasr school, three ICEM observers have been asked to sign a pledge that they will not be leaving the polling station

Polling Centers Late in Opening

45% of the polling facilities observed by the ICEM observers have not yet opened by the time of this report. The two main reasons for the late opening are that either the supervising judge was late or the judge would not start until the indelible ink was supplied to the polling station. In some other cases voting was delayed due to the absence of the candidate poll-watchers.

Campaign Materials and Other Violations

ICEM observers have been reporting about campaigning outside the polling facilities for position, opposition and independent candidates throughout Egypt. Observers have reported of only a few cases where they have witnessed campaigning and materials inside polling centers.

ICEM observers are reporting that position, opposition and independent candidate supporters and thugs are present at the majority of the polling facilities intimidating voters. This form of illegal campaigning is adding to the tensions and making the environment volatile.

2nd PRESS STATEMENT
INDEPENDENT COMMITTEE FOR ELECTION MONITORING (ICEM)

Wednesday, November 9, 2005 3:00 pm

Election Day Monitoring: The Voting Process

ICEM has fielded 1,586 observers to monitor the voting and counting procedures today in 10,644 polling subcommittees distributed among 3,061 polling centers in which a total of 10,752,458 voters are assigned to vote.

Reports of Kidnapping

ICEM monitors report that two Al-Wafd party poll-watchers, Taufi Negad and Hani Samiar, have been kidnapped yesterday in Kafr Shobra, El-Baugur district in Munefeja and are still reported missing. They were carrying with them the credentials necessary for the rest of their party's poll-watchers to gain access to the polling stations. Muhamed Mehdi, another poll-watcher for the Al-Wafd party, was also kidnapped yesterday in the same district, purportedly by NDP supporters, and then later released. These poll-watchers were all representing Dr. Muhamed Kemel, who is running against NDP candidate Kemel Shazli.

ICEM urges security forces to immediately investigate all these unfortunate criminal acts and bring the perpetrators to justice. Additionally, ICEM expresses its support for the families of those missing and is fully committed to aid in bringing the two kidnapping victims home safely.

Gunshots

In the Rod El-Farag/Shubra district in Cairo, monitors have reported gunshots between supporters of different parties, resulting in two injured. ICEM monitors are on the ground gathering more information, and ICEM continues to urge authorities to investigate any such acts of violence.

Polls Opened

By 11:00 am, the vast majority of the polling stations opened and voters started voting in all of the eight governorates in Egypt.

ICEM observers have reported that by 14:00 hours, around 10% of the expected registered voters had showed up to vote. The relatively low turnout remains a concern and also demonstrates that election authorities failed to conduct any meaningful voter education campaigns. Democracy is built on the notion of civic participation and voter education remains critical to promoting the principles of transparency and accountability. However, ICEM monitors are reporting an increase in the percentage of women voting as compared to the September Presidential election.

Violence

As he tried to take photographs of ballot-stuffing, ICEM observer Sami Dieb was beaten by the supporters of NDP candidate Ahmed Fathi Surur, the chair the People's Assembly in the Saeda Zeineb district in Cairo.

NDP supporters beat the Al-Wafd newspaper reporter in the El-Baugur district in Manufeja and assaulted a group of journalists in El-Saaf district. In the Hadeik El-Kobba district, the NDP candidate beat a Muslim Brotherhood poll-watcher.

According to the ICEM monitors in Bab-El-Shariah, three people sustained injuries in a clash between NDP and Al-Ghad supporters.

ICEM observers are reporting reoccurring violence between supporters of various candidates in the Giza, El-Badrashin and El-Gamaleja districts in Cairo.

In the Dairut district in Asyut, an independent candidate's supporters are manning the entrance to a polling station at the El-Kheid school and intimidating voters.

Tampering with Voters' Lists and Ballots

Overall, many ICEM observers have reported inaccuracies and inconsistencies regarding the voters' lists throughout all of Egypt. ICEM maintains that the accuracy and the integrity of the voters' lists remain critical to any voting process.

Monitors in Asiut (Dairut district) and also in Giza (El-Bulaq Dakrur) district report that voters' lists were replaced during the voting process.

In the El-Haluan and El-Tibin districts of Cairo, the voters' lists at the polling stations differ from the ones hung on the walls of the polling center. Monitors also report that several of the voters' lists are handwritten.

In Giza, El-Bulaq Dakrur district, a few of the candidates' numbers have been changed in the ballots.

In Cairo, El-Helwan district, monitors report that ballots of the other districts were delivered. The voting had to be postponed for three hours until the proper ballots were located and delivered.

At the Shagarat Mariam polling center in the Matareya District of Cairo, monitors have reported that additional ballots have been brought in and not registered.

Violating the Secrecy of the Ballot

ICEM monitors have reported witnessing consistent violation of the secrecy of the voting process, in addition to group voting in Cairo, El-Helwan, El-Halifa and El-Manial districts and in Giza.

Campaign and Other Violations

ICEM observers report fierce campaigning in the close vicinity of the polling centers by all party and independent candidates. ICEM observers are reporting that NDP, opposition, independent candidate supporters, and thugs remain present at the majority of the polling facilities and are intimidating voters. This form of illegal campaigning is continuing to incite violence.

Independent Committee For Election Monitoring (ICEM)

3rd PRESS STATEMENT
INDEPENDENT COMMITTEE FOR ELECTION MONITORING (ICEM)

Wednesday, November 9, 2005 9:00 pm

Election Day Monitoring: The Voting Process and The Close of the Polls

ICEM has fielded 1,586 observers to monitor the voting and counting procedures today in 10,644 polling subcommittees distributed among 3,061 polling centers in which a total of 10,752,458 voters are assigned to vote.

Approximately 400 ICEM observers are planned to observe the counting of the ballots. Initial information suggests that many of these monitors are not being allowed to observe the count, even some with official permission from the Egyptian Ministry of Justice. ICEM urges the relevant authorities to comply with the law and allow monitors to observe the counting of the ballots.

ICEM believes that no election can be called free, fair and transparent if voters have been denied the right to monitor and scrutinize the process by which their vote is being allocated.

ICEM welcomes the cooperation of the security services, and thanks them for generally not interfering with the electoral process by taking sides during most of the incidents that took place earlier today. In addition, ICEM highly appreciates the authorities' decision to give NGO observers access to the voting process.

In general, ICEM monitors have reported that election officials have managed to observe the proper identification of voters. Also, the vast majority of the polling stations were appropriately supplied with indelible ink. Nonetheless, the electoral process has been marred by serious and widespread violations that have undermined the credibility and the integrity of the election. These violations include voter intimidation, vote-buying, ballot stuffing, inaccurate voters' lists, the appearance of official ballots outside the polling stations, and the discovery of blank, but stamped, pink voters' cards. In addition, reports of kidnappings, beatings, shootings and arrests provide a truly unacceptable background for a democratic election.

Voter Turnout

According to initial ICEM reports, an average of 34% of registered voters voted at the polling stations observed by ICEM. ICEM will be providing a breakdown of voter turnout by district in tomorrow's preliminary election-day report.

Electoral Transgressions and Irregularities

In addition to the incidents noted in ICEM's previous two reports, the following have also been observed by monitors:

There have been repeated reports of the closing of polling stations during official voting times without justification, for up to several hours, at places such as the al-Attar school in Shubra and Bayad al-Arab in Benisuef.

Vote-buying has been reported in Shubra, Nozha, Hadday, Mataria: all of which are districts in Cairo.

In the Shebbin al-Kom district, hired women tried to prevent other women from voting at polling stations. At the Fatema Zahra school in the Medinat al-Salam district, NDP supporters intimidated voters.

In Heliopolis, candidate representatives were not allowed into the polling stations until 10 AM under allegations that judges did not receive instructions to allow them into the stations.

Also in Heliopolis, in the Muhammed Rifat school and the Season Browie private school, there were at least two cases of NDP candidate representatives stuffing ballots under the supervision of the judges there.

Additionally, monitors observed NDP supporters voting multiple times in Heliopolis by traveling from one polling place to another via organized minibuses, with license plate numbers: 5253, 11281, 40223, and 181. In a similar action of multiple-voting, public buses were used to transport employees of the National Electricity Company from one polling station to another in Giza to support the NDP.

At least 150 blank, but officially stamped, pink voter-cards were found at the al-Abour school in the Mataria district.

In the al-Zetoun district, group voting took place by the Manfeese Medical Company, where employees arrived en masse and voted together for the NDP candidate there.

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