

PRESS STATEMENT
INDEPENDENT COMMITTEE ON ELECTION MONITORING

Wednesday, November 15, 2005 11:00AM

The Independent Committee for Election Monitoring (ICEM), a coalition of sixteen NGOs led by the Ibn Khaldun Center is deploying a total of 5,000 observers to monitor the voting process for the Parliamentary election. ICEM is aimed at providing for the integrity and the credibility of the election process. In the first run-off round of the elections, ICEM has deployed 1400 observers to monitor the voting and counting procedures in 74 electoral districts where 266 candidates are competing for 133 seats.

ICEM continues to welcome the cooperation offered by state security services to ensure the safety and security of election monitors. However, ICEM's concern is that state security services are not duly performing their role in providing a safe and secure environment for the voters. ICEM continues to witness the presence of perpetrators at polling stations who are tasked with intimidating voters.

Pre-Election Day Confusion

In some districts of Cairo and Giza, the previous results were contested in the Administrative Court which ruled two days ago that these districts should have reelections. This ruling, however, has been appealed and no final ruling has been made by the Courts. ICEM maintains that this string of decisions should have been made earlier because, up until the last moment, voters did not know whether or not there would be a revote.

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.

Authorities Continue to Enforce Arbitrary Decisions

Authorities continue to enforce arbitrary decisions that seriously undermine the election monitoring and thus damage the transparency of the election. Though many observers were allowed initial access to the polling stations in order to monitor the opening process, many were also warned that there is a new instruction that reneges on their guaranteed access throughout the day. ICEM appreciates the fact that the monitors were allowed to observe the opening process, in contrast with the November 9 election. Any decision that restricts NGOs' rights to scrutinize the voting and counting process seriously undermines the citizens' right to a fair and transparent process. ICEM views that this decision undermines the freedom and independence of civic organizations in Egypt. The last-minute decisions only further reveal the authorities' policy of obscuring information in order to generate confusion.

In addition, authorities' persistent failure to make public detailed election-day procedures and any information concerning voters' lists, polling subcommittee and polling center locations, critically affects the integrity and the transparency of the election process.

ICEM observers also reported that opposition candidate poll-watchers are being denied access to the polling stations.

ICEM Observers Harassed and Interrogated

In Giza, an ICEM observer was harassed by supporters of Abdel Nasser in Nazlet El-Samman district. In Assiut, ICEM observer Youssef Abdel Latif was interrogated by a police officer named Said El-Bendary.

Official Ballots Continue to be Found Outside the Polling Station

ICEM observers in Giza, Cairo and Matareya have witnessed the distribution of official and stamped ballots outside the polling stations. ICEM views this as flagrant violation of the electoral law which undermines the credibility of the entire election outcome.

Also, a number of blank administrative certificates, which allow citizens to vote, have been found in Manufeya. ICEM's concern is that the certificates are used for multiple voting when a person votes first under his name using his voter ID and then under someone else's name using the administrative certificate.

Polling Centers Late in Opening

Around 50% of the polling facilities observed by the ICEM observers had not opened on time. The 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.

Violence Occurs

Late opening resulted in the accumulation of large crowds in front of the polling stations leading to the outbreak of fights between rival candidate supporters. Cases such as this have been reported in El-Kosbagy Youth Center in Giza, in Zaat-El-Kom polling center in the Kerdesa district in Giza. In Bandar Assiut, violence broke out between NDP supporters and members of the Muslim Brotherhood.

In Bandar Beni Sueif, Saiefallah Mohammed, a journalist, was beaten while he tried to cover the polling station and his camera was destroyed. In the same district, violence and gunshots have been reported between NDP candidate supporters.

Irregularities in the Listing of the Candidates on the Ballot

Candidates were supposed to be listed on the ballots according to the number of votes they received in the first round. This, however, was not respected in all cases. For instance, in the Matareya district the NDP candidate was ranked first on the ballot while in actuality he should have been ranked fourth.

Voters Lists Inaccuracies

In the first hours of the voting, ICEM observers continued to report inaccuracies with the voters' lists.

Campaign Materials and Other Violations

ICEM observers are reporting that campaigning is taking place for NDP, opposition and independent candidates outside the polling facilities throughout Egypt. Observers have reported only a few cases where they have witnessed campaigning and materials inside polling centers.

ICEM observers reported that mainly NDP, but also opposition and independent candidate supporters, and thugs are present at the majority of the polling facilities intimidating voters. This form of illegal campaigning is inflammatory and making the environment extremely volatile.

Use of Children for Campaign Purposes

There were several instances of minors being recruited to campaign for candidates. They are often enlisted to ride around in the backs of trucks shouting slogans. This puts them at risk of being exposed to violence. ICEM objects to this practice as it is a violation of their human rights.

PRESS STATEMENT
INDEPENDENT COMMITTEE FOR ELECTION MONITORING (ICEM)

Tuesday, November 15, 2005 3:00 pm

Election Day Monitoring: The Voting Process

The Independent Committee for Election Monitoring (ICEM), a coalition of sixteen NGOs led by the Ibn Khaldun Center is deploying a total of 5,000 observers to monitor the voting process for the Parliamentary election. ICEM is aimed at providing for the integrity and the credibility of the election process. In the first run-off round of the elections, ICEM has deployed 1400 observers to monitor the voting and counting procedures in 74 electoral districts where 266 candidates are competing for 133 seats.

Polls Opened

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

ICEM observers are reporting a disturbing escalation of violence throughout polling places in Egypt. ICEM urges all actors to maintain calm in order to ensure a free and fair voting environment. Moreover, ICEM calls upon the legal authorities to investigate all reported acts of violence.

Violence against ICEM Observers

Two ICEM observers were beaten by NDP supporters in the Al Helwan district of Cairo at the Amr Abdel Aziz School,

In Al Kharga district of the Wadi al Gadeed governorate, four ICEM observers—two of whom female—were harassed and expelled from the polling center by polling officials.

In the Atfih district of Giza, supporters of the candidate Mustapha Moqabani assaulted ICEM observer Amro Abdel Aziz and threatened his life if he were to return.

Violence Intensifies

The police fired shots in the air in an attempt to control crowds after a quarrel broke out between NDP loyalists and the supporters of the independent candidate Mohamed Masaoud in the Boula' District of Cairo at the Al Salaam School polling center. The polling center was subsequently closed for three hours.

Another violent skirmish was reported at the Al Salaam Preparatory School in the Al Ayat district of Giza when supporters of the NDP candidate Salem Shafi clashed with those of the Al Ghad candidate Ali abul Saoud. Several injuries were reported as a result of stabbings and beatings.

In Assiut, a Muslim Brotherhood candidate, Khalid Aouda was assaulted in the polling station by the NDP candidate Mohamed Ahmed Al Sahn.

At Al Hadeesa School for Girls in Bandar Bani Seif district, a group led by the NDP candidate beat Muslim Brotherhood supporters with wooden clubs. At least one woman was a victim of these beatings.

In the Al Kharga district of Al Wadi al Gadeed governorate, supporters of two different NDP candidates clashed in front of Al Hilaal Preparatory School.

Voter Turnout

According to initial ICEM reports, an average of 16% of registered voters voted at the polling stations observed by ICEM till 3:00 PM. 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.

Inaccurate Voters' Lists

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. A notable number of voters are experiencing difficulty finding their names on voters' lists. Moreover, in several instances the names of already deceased individuals' names have been found on voters' lists.

Vote Buying, Multiple Voting, and Bussing of Voters

NDP candidate Sayid Mashal of Cairo's the Helwan district has erected a large tent in front of polling stations where he is openly stamping pink voter IDs and distributing 35 EGP per vote.

Public vote buying has been reported in the Abnou district of Assiut on the part of independent Adid al Baroudy.

Also in the Helwan district, which contains several militarily controlled industrial complexes, factory workers were loaded onto state owned busses and taken to a polling station where they handed over their IDs to a poll watcher for NDP candidate Sayid

Mashal, who is also the Minister of Military Production. The poll watcher then cast their votes collectively.

Officially stamped pink voting IDs were reportedly sold outside the polling station at the Abu Saddiq School in Imbaba.

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, Giza and Assiut.

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. Hired thugs are targeting primarily supporters of Muslim Brotherhood candidates.

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

Tuesday, November 15, 2005 9:00 pm

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

The Independent Committee for Election Monitoring (ICEM), a coalition of sixteen NGOs led by the Ibn Khaldun Center is deploying a total of 5,000 observers to monitor the voting process for the Parliamentary election. ICEM is aimed at providing for the integrity and the credibility of the election process. In the first run-off round of the elections, ICEM has deployed 1400 observers to monitor the voting and counting procedures in 74 electoral districts where 266 candidates are competing for 133 seats.

Approximately 300 ICEM observers are planning to observe the counting of the ballots. Initial information suggests that many of these monitors are not being allowed to observe the count, even though some of them 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 transformed into real political representation.

Today's elections were marked by a significantly higher level of violence than the previous round. This violence involved supporters for the NDP, opposition and independent candidates. For the most part, the same type of irregularities and violations that were present in the first election also occurred today.

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 continued to be followed with 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 shootings, beatings, and arrests unfortunately continue to be part of the electoral process and thus provide a truly unacceptable background for a democratic election.

Voter Turnout

According to initial ICEM reports, a maximum of 24.8% of registered voters turned out. Because the ICEM's activities were located in hotly contested polling stations expected to draw out more of the electorate, this number could possibly be biased in an upwards direction.

Electoral Violations and Irregularities

In addition to the previous reports, numerous others have been received. Among these:

Thugs, in plain sight of the police, prevented voters from entering the polling places in Bandar Beni Sueif and in the Nasser district. In the same district at Al-Adwa school, the polling station was closed for a few hours to prevent a group of Muslim Brotherhood supporters who had gathered from voting.

In Al-Quseiya district of the Assiut governorate, the candidate poll-watcher for the NDP was seen filling in ballots on behalf of the voters.

The son of Khaled Oda, the independent candidate in the Assiut district, was beaten by NDP supporters.

A Muslim Brotherhood poll-watcher was beaten by NDP supporters in the Baba district in Beni Sueif.

In the Imbaba district of Giza, polling station #85, the ICEM observer witnessed the padlock meant to secure the ballot box being broken and then replaced with another.

In the Kerdasa district of Giza, security personnel were observed encouraging people not to vote for the Muslim Brotherhood.

In the Sodffa district of Assiut, polling station #14, people were witnessed voting in place of their wives. The supervising judge permitted this behavior.

Also in Assiut, sodfa district, a judge by the name of Mokhtar Hussein left polling station #16 for two hours, leaving the station manned only by candidate poll-watchers.

PRESS STATEMENT
INDEPENDENT COMMITTEE FOR ELECTION MONITORING

**PRELIMINARY REPORT ON E-DAY VOTING AND COUNTING PROCESS FOR THE FIRST
ROUND RUN-OFF OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS**

Thursday, November 16, 2005 5:00AM

Free, fair and transparent elections are the basis for any meaningful democracy. The Independent Committee for Election Monitoring (ICEM), a coalition of sixteen NGOs led by the Ibn Khaldun Center is deploying a total of 5,000 observers to monitor the voting process for the Parliamentary election. ICEM is aimed at providing for the integrity and the credibility of the election process. In the first phase of the elections, ICEM has deployed total of 2000 observers to monitor the voting and counting procedures in 82 electoral districts where candidates competed for 164 seats.

ICEM continues to welcome the cooperation offered by state security services to ensure the safety and security of election monitors. However, ICEM's concern is that state security services are not duly performing their role in providing a safe and secure environment for the voters. In contrast to their performance during the first round of elections, security services did not always perform their duty in a neutral manner. Security services allowed the presence of perpetrators at polling stations who sought to intimidate and influence voters.

In general, ICEM monitors reported that election officials respected the procedures regarding the identification of individual 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 beatings, shootings and arrests provide a truly unacceptable background for a democratic election. ICEM is concerned with the escalated violence compared to the first round of elections.

Election authorities have failed to institute mechanisms that would ensure the credibility of the election outcome. All but a few of the ICEM observers were denied access to monitoring the counting of the votes and thus election officials have flagrantly violated the law and Parliamentary Election Committee decision. Furthermore the few that were able to monitor this process have reported severe deficiencies that undermine the credibility of the election outcome. The few observers that managed to get access to the counting centers have reported that the counting was conducted in an inconsistent and chaotic environment. Furthermore, individual polling station results were not announced to anyone present and were secretly tabulated out of the sight of any of the monitors,

including candidate poll-watchers. Authorities also failed to provide any break-down of the district results by the polling stations.

Conclusions

- *Authorities Failed to Institute Mechanisms that Would Ensure the Credibility of the Election Outcome*

ICEM maintains that no election can be called free, fair and transparent if voters have been denied the right to monitor and scrutinize the entire process by which their vote is transformed into real political representation. NGOs' right to monitor the count of the votes is critical to having an election that could be called free, fair and transparent. Thus, ICEM insists that election administration authorities continue with the progress already made and allow NGOs to monitor this essential moment during any electoral process. Furthermore, denying observers the opportunity to monitor the count of the votes seriously undermines any meaningful monitoring of the voting process.

- *Authorities' Arbitrary Decisions Continued to Seriously Damage the Transparency of the Election*

The Ministry of Justice again insisted that only those NGOs registered through the Ministry of Social Affairs could enter polling centers. This seriously undermines the citizens' right to monitor and scrutinize the voting process. ICEM believes that this decision undermines the freedom and independence of civic organizations in Egypt.

In addition, the authorities' intentional delay in releasing information regarding legal disputes over the reelections in some districts created unnecessary confusion. ICEM maintains that this string of decisions should have been made public earlier because, up until the last moment, voters did not know whether or not there would be a revote.

- *Election Marred by Severe and Widespread Violations and Irregularities*

The election has been marred by serious and widespread violations that have undermined its credibility and integrity. These violations include voter intimidation, vote-buying, ballot stuffing, inaccurate voters' lists, the appearance of official ballots outside the polling stations, the discovery of blank, but stamped, pink voters' cards and the switching of ballot boxes. In addition, reports of kidnappings, beatings, shootings and arrests provide a truly unacceptable background for a democratic election.

The Opening of the Polls

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

Authorities Continue to Enforce Arbitrary Decisions

Authorities continued to enforce arbitrary decisions that seriously undermined the election monitoring and have thus damaged the transparency of the election. Though many observers were allowed initial access to the polling stations in order to monitor the opening process, many were also warned that there is a new instruction that reneges on their guaranteed access throughout the day. ICEM appreciates the fact that the monitors were allowed to observe the opening process, in contrast with the November 9 election. Any decision that restricts NGOs' rights to scrutinize the voting and counting process seriously undermines the citizens' right to a fair and transparent process. ICEM views that this decision undermines the freedom and independence of civic organizations in Egypt. The last-minute decisions only further reveal the authorities' policy of obscuring information in order to generate confusion.

ICEM observers also reported that opposition candidates' poll-watchers were denied access to the polling stations.

Polling Centers Late in Opening

Around 50% of the polling facilities observed by the ICEM observers had not opened on time. The 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.

Official Ballots Continued to be Found Outside the Polling Station

ICEM observers in Giza, Cairo and Matareya witnessed the distribution of official and stamped ballots outside the polling stations. ICEM views this as flagrant violation of the electoral law which undermines the credibility of the entire election outcome.

Also, a number of blank administrative certificates, which allow citizens to vote, were found in Manufeya. These certificates were used for multiple voting when citizens first voted under their own name using a voter ID and then under someone else's name using the administrative certificate.

Irregularities in the Listing of the Candidates on the Ballot

Candidates were supposed to be listed on the ballots according to the number of votes they received in the first round. This, however, was not respected in all cases. For instance, in the Matareya district the NDP candidate was ranked first on the ballot while in actuality he should have been ranked fourth.

Use of Children for Campaign Purposes

There were several instances of minors being recruited to campaign for candidates. They are often enlisted to ride around in the backs of trucks shouting slogans. This puts them at risk of being exposed to violence. ICEM objects to this practice as it is a violation of their human rights.

Election Day Monitoring: The Voting Process

ICEM observers reported a disturbing escalation of violence throughout polling places in Egypt. This violence involved supporters for the NDP, opposition and independent candidates. For the most part, the same type of irregularities and violations that were present in the first election also occurred. ICEM calls upon the legal authorities to investigate all reported acts of violence and to prosecute the perpetrators. ICEM urges all actors to limit this violence in the coming phases of parliamentary elections in order to ensure a peaceful and safe environment for all citizens.

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 continued to be followed with 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 shootings, beatings, and arrests unfortunately continue to be part of the electoral process and thus provide a truly unacceptable background for a democratic election.

Violence Intensifies

Compared to the first round of elections on November 9, the run-off witnessed a significant escalation in the number of violent acts.

The police fired shots in the air in an attempt to control crowds after a quarrel broke out between NDP loyalists and the supporters of the independent candidate Mohamed Masaoud in the Boula' District of Cairo at the Al Salaam School polling center. The polling center was subsequently closed for three hours.

Another violent skirmish was reported at the Al Salaam Preparatory School in the Al Ayat district of Giza when supporters of the NDP candidate Salem Shafi clashed with those of the Al Ghad candidate Ali abul Saoud. Several injuries were reported as a result of stabbings and beatings.

In Assiut, a Muslim Brotherhood candidate, Khalid Aouda was assaulted in the polling station by the NDP candidate Mohamed Ahmed Al Sahn.

At Al Hadeesa School for Girls in Bandar Bani Seif district, a group led by the NDP candidate beat Muslim Brotherhood supporters with wooden clubs. At least one woman was a victim of these beatings.

In the Al Kharga district of Al Wadi al Gadeed governorate, supporters of two different NDP candidates clashed in front of Al Hilaal Preparatory School.

In Bandar Beni Sueif, Saiefallah Mohammed, a journalist, was beaten while he tried to cover the polling station and his camera was destroyed. In the same district, violence and gunshots have been reported between NDP candidate supporters.

The son of Khaled Oda, the independent candidate in the Assiut district, was beaten by NDP supporters.

A Muslim Brotherhood poll-watcher was beaten by NDP supporters in the Baba district in Beni Sueif.

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ICEM Observers Harassed and Interrogated

In Giza, an ICEM observer was harassed by supporters of Abdel Nasser in Nazlet El-Samman district. In Assiut, ICEM observer Youssef Abdel Latif was interrogated by a police officer named Said El-Bendary.

Voter Turnout

According to initial ICEM reports, a maximum of 24.8% of registered voters turned out in polling stations which ICEM monitored. Because the majority of ICEM's activities were located in hotly contested polling centers expected to draw out more of the electorate, this number could possibly be biased in an upwards direction.

Electoral Violations and Irregularities

Thugs, in plain sight of the police, prevented voters from entering the polling places in Bandar Beni Sueif and in the Nasser district. In the same district at Al-Adwa school, the polling station was closed for a few hours to prevent a group of Muslim Brotherhood supporters who had gathered from voting.

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In the Kerdasa district of Giza, security personnel were observed encouraging people not to vote for the Muslim Brotherhood.

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Also in Assiut, sodfa district, a judge by the name of Mokhtar Hussein left polling station #16 for two hours, leaving the station manned only by candidate poll-watchers.

Vote Buying, Multiple Voting, and Bussing of Voters

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Also in the Helwan district, which contains several militarily controlled industrial complexes, factory workers were loaded onto state owned busses and taken to a polling station where they handed over their IDs to a poll watcher for NDP candidate Sayid Mashal, who is also the Minister of Military Production. The poll watcher then cast their votes collectively.

Officially stamped pink voting IDs were reportedly sold outside the polling station at the Abu Saddiq School in Imbaba.

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, Giza and Assiut.

Campaign and Other Violations

ICEM observers reported fierce campaigning in the close vicinity of the polling centers by all party and independent candidates. ICEM observers reported that NDP, opposition, independent candidate supporters, and thugs remained present at the majority of the polling facilities and intimidated voters. This form of illegal campaigning continued to

incite violence. Hired thugs targeted primarily supporters of Muslim Brotherhood candidates.

Election Day Monitoring: The Counting Process

300 monitors were specifically dedicated to monitoring counting centers for the first run-off round of the Parliamentary election in an effort to observe the counting process and improve the overall transparency and credibility of the election results.

Authorities have again Failed to Institute Mechanisms to Ensure the Credibility of the Election Outcome

Election officials did not allow the vast majority of ICEM observers to monitor the counting of the votes, and thus violated both the Parliamentary Election Committee's decision and the law. Only 22 of the 300 potential observers were allowed to monitor counting, despite the fact that most observers had the required accreditation from the Ministry of Justice.

The few observers who were able to monitor the counting witnessed severe deficiencies in the process, reporting that the counting was conducted in an inconsistent manner within a chaotic environment where scores of ballot boxes were counted simultaneously. Furthermore, individual polling station results were not announced to anyone present, instead they were secretly tabulated away from the supervision of any monitors, including candidate poll-watchers. The opacity of this action is antithetical to the very idea of transparency. Additionally, even after the votes had been counted secretly, authorities still failed to provide any breakdown of the district results by polling station. Within the context of such observed violations of the counting process, it seems that the credibility of the election outcome has been undermined.

ICEM views that no election can be called free, fair and transparent if voters have been denied the right to monitor and scrutinize the entire process by which their vote is transformed into real political representation. NGOs' right to monitor the count of the votes is critical to having an election that could be called free, fair and transparent. Thus, ICEM urges election administration authorities to continue to make progress towards transparent elections and allow NGOs to monitor this essential moment during the electoral process. ICEM maintains that the authorities' refusal to allow adequate numbers of NGO observers to witness the count of the votes seriously undermines any meaningful monitoring of the voting process and demonstrates a failure to meet the acceptable criteria constituting any free and fair electoral process.

The Specifics of Counting Transgressions and Irregularities

In addition to NGO observers' inability to monitor the counting of the votes, many candidate poll-watchers were also denied access to the counting centers. Moreover, in a number of cases candidate poll-watchers were denied access or delayed entrance to the counting centers. In all cases, no more than two poll-watchers per candidate were allowed

observe the counting process, rendering it impossible to keep track of the average of more than one hundred ballot boxes being counted in each counting center.

The transport of ballot boxes from the polling center to the counting center was not subjected to any kind of independent monitoring. This obviously breached the transparency of the entire process.

The few monitors that were allowed to witness the counting process reported the following violations:

In the Masr Kadema district of Cairo, the judge halted the counting for thirty minutes after the preliminary results showed a likely victory for the Muslim Brotherhood candidate over the NDP one. This same phenomenon was repeated in Matareya and Medinet Nasr districts.

In the district of El-Khalifa, the supervising judge did not permit the poll-watchers to adequately view the counting of the ballots since they were ordered not to approach either the ballots or the boxes.

Many additional disruptions occurred when the official results were announced. In Al-Manyial district, quarreling and violence broke out among candidate supporters when the supporters of the NDP candidate assaulted the supporters of Sheahinaz Al-Naggar after the results showed her to be the winner. This also happened in the Helwan district, but this time it was the victorious NDP candidate, Minister of Military Production Sayed Mashaal, who publicly humiliated the other candidates. In Imbaba Ba, the supporters of the independent candidate burned the NDP headquarters in protest of the announced results which they felt were not in accordance with their own observations.

INDEPENDENT COMMITTEE FOR ELECTION MONITORING

4th PRESS STATEMENT
INDEPENDENT COMMITTEE FOR ELECTION MONITORING
(ICEM)

Wednesday, November 16, 2005 2:00PM

Election Day Monitoring: The Counting Process

The Independent Committee for Election Monitoring (ICEM), a coalition of sixteen NGOs led by the Ibn Khaldun Center is deploying a total of 5,000 observers to monitor the voting process for the Parliamentary elections.

ICEM is aimed at providing for the integrity and the credibility of the election process. In the run-off round of the elections, ICEM deployed 1400 observers to monitor the voting and counting procedures in 74 electoral districts where 266 candidates are competed for 133 seats. 300 of these monitors were specifically dedicated to monitoring counting centers for the first run-off round of the Parliamentary election in an effort to observe the counting process and improve the overall transparency and credibility of the election results.

An Overview: Authorities Fail to Institute Mechanisms to Ensure the Credibility of the Election Outcome

Election officials did not allow the vast majority of ICEM observers to monitor the counting of the votes, and thus violated both the Parliamentary Election Committee's decision and the law. Only 22 of the 300 potential observers were allowed to monitor counting, despite the fact that most observers had the required accreditation from the Ministry of Justice.

The few observers who were able to monitor the counting have witnessed severe deficiencies in the process, reporting that the counting was conducted in an inconsistent manner within a chaotic environment where scores of ballot boxes were counted simultaneously. Furthermore, individual polling station results were not announced to anyone present, instead they were secretly tabulated away from the supervision of any monitors, including candidate poll-watchers. The opacity of this action is antithetical to the very idea of transparency. Additionally, even after the votes had been counted secretly, authorities still failed to provide any breakdown of the district results by polling station. Within the context of such observed violations of the counting process, it seems that the credibility of the election outcome has been undermined.

ICEM views that no election can be called free, fair and transparent if voters have been denied the right to monitor and scrutinize the entire process by which their vote is transformed into real political representation. NGOs' right to monitor the count of the votes is critical to having an election that could be called free, fair and transparent. Thus, ICEM urges election administration authorities to continue to make progress towards

transparent elections and allow NGOs to monitor this essential moment during the electoral process. ICEM maintains that the authorities' refusal to allow adequate numbers of NGO observers to witness the count of the votes seriously undermines any meaningful monitoring of the voting process and demonstrates a failure to meet the acceptable criteria constituting any free and fair electoral process.

The Specifics of Counting Transgressions and Irregularities

In addition to NGO observers' inability to monitor the counting of the votes, many candidate poll-watchers were also denied access to the counting centers. Moreover, in a number of cases candidate poll-watchers were denied access or delayed entrance to the counting centers. In all cases, no more than two poll-watchers per candidate were allowed observe the counting process, rendering it impossible to keep track of the average of more than one hundred ballot boxes being counted in each counting center.

The transport of ballot boxes from the polling center to the counting center was not subjected to any kind of independent monitoring. This obviously breached the transparency of the entire process.

The few monitors that were allowed to witness the counting process reported the following violations:

In the Masr Kadema district of Cairo, the judge halted the counting for thirty minutes after the preliminary results showed a likely victory for the Muslim Brotherhood candidate over the NDP one. This same phenomenon was repeated in Matareya and Medinet Nasr districts.

In the district of El-Khalifa, the supervising judge did not permit the poll-watchers to adequately view the counting of the ballots since they were ordered not to approach either the ballots or the boxes.

Many additional disruptions occurred when the official results were announced. In Al-Manyial district, quarreling and violence broke out among candidate supporters when the supporters of the NDP candidate assaulted the supporters of Sheahinaz Al-Naggar after the results showed her to be the winner. This also happened in the Helwan district, but this time it was the victorious NDP candidate, Minister of Military Production Sayed Mashaal, who publicly humiliated the other candidates. In Imbaba Ba, the supporters of the independent candidate burned the NDP headquarters in protest of the announced results which they felt were not in accordance with their own observations.

***Independent Committee
For Election Monitoring
(ICEM)***