



PRESS STATEMENT
INDEPENDENT COMMITTEE ON ELECTION MONITORING

Opening of the Polls

Sunday, November 20, 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 1500 observers to monitor the voting and counting procedures in 72 electoral districts of 9 governorates where more than 1700 candidates are competing for 144 seats.

Election Day Monitoring: The Opening of the Polls

Situation Deteriorating

All morning reports from field observers indicate deterioration in the level of violence, in allowing observers to enter polling stations, in cooperation from security forces, and in general respect for electoral procedures.

Reported Arrests of Candidate Poll-Watchers and Supporters

ICEM observers are reporting of systematic arrests in upper Egypt, particularly poll-watchers and candidate supporters of Muslim Brotherhood candidates. Over 50 supporters and poll-watchers have already been arrested in Qena and Fayoum.

In addition, 17 Muslim Brotherhood supporters were arrested in the Tanta district of Gharbaya.

Observers Beaten and Denied Access to Polling Stations

Two ICEM observers, Mahmoud Shehata and Mohamed Taha, have been beaten in Ismalia by NDP supporters driving a vehicle with plates numbered 539630 and registered in Assiut. This took place in district of Ismalia at the Zera'a School. Another ICEM

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observer, Abdullah Unis, was assaulted by a police officer in the Hadat region of Luxor at the Mubarak Preparatory School.

In this second phase of elections, far more restrictions have been imposed upon ICEM observers. In the vast majority of polling stations, ICEM observers have been denied entry to observe the opening procedures. Authorities' arbitrary decisions continue to seriously undermine Egypt's citizens' rights to a fair and transparent process.

Polling Centers Late in Opening

Around 65% of the polling facilities observed by the ICEM observers had not opened on time. ICEM is not in a position to report on the opening procedures as the majority of its observers were denied access to the polling stations. ICEM can, however, confirm that voting was delayed in the majority of polling stations because judges arrived late, as did supplies of indelible ink.

Violence

ICEM observers are reporting of increased and systematic efforts to intimidate voters throughout Egypt. Observers have reported that organized teams of thugs, primarily NDP supporters, are engaging in criminal activities such as threatening and preventing voters from accessing polling stations. In the early hours of the morning, ICEM has already received an overwhelming number of reports from Alexandria, Fayoum, Gharbaya, Port Said, and Qena.

ICEM believes that the failure of the authorities to investigate past actions of violence and intimidation has encouraged this escalating criminal activity. ICEM calls upon the authorities to investigate these offenses and bring perpetrators to justice.

A disturbance in Tanta is currently escalating. Police are reported to have fired warning shots in the air and used tear gas when Muslim Brotherhood supporters staged a demonstration upon being denied access to polling stations at the Maha Tawakol and Sidi Mohamed Abdul Rahman Schools.

In the first district Ismalia, a Muslim Brotherhood Candidate Mohamed Hussein Ali was beaten by thugs that are reportedly moving from one polling station to the next driving a red truck registered in Giza with plates numbered 40474.

In the Barma district of Al Gharbaya, there was a quarrel between supporters of NDP candidate Mohamed Alougy and those of the independent candidate Ismail Asharqawy.

In the Al Mahalla district of Gharbaya a quarrel erupted between supporters of the NDP candidate Samir Aissa and those of the independent candidate Ismail Al-Banna. Several supporters of the independent candidate were severely injured and rushed to the hospital.

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In the Manchea district of Alexandria, thugs have apparently overrun at least five polling stations armed with knives and clubs. The Palestine School, Qasm Amin Preparatory School, Al Aymiraya Prep School and several others are among these polling stations.

ICEM continues to receive a growing number of reports indicating a concerning escalation of violence at polling places.

Campaigning

ICEM observers are reporting that campaigning is taking place for NDP, opposition and independent candidates outside the polling facilities throughout Egypt.

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

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PRESS STATEMENT
INDEPENDENT COMMITTEE ON ELECTION MONITORING

Heightened Levels of Violence Mars Election

Sunday, November 20, 2005 4:00 PM

Since early this morning, ICEM had been receiving reports of violent incidents throughout Egypt. Reports reveal a systematic and planned campaign of intimidation against opposition voters, in particular, Muslim Brotherhood supporters and candidates. These incidents have ranged from assault and battery to homicide. ICEM condemns in the strongest possible terms this and all types of violence. Thus far, the violent incidents have posed the greatest challenge to the fairness of the elections and have severely prevented voters from freely expressing their will. As the election process unfolds, it is becoming obvious that there is an organized campaign of violence with little or no effective police intervention or prevention. The organized campaign of violence not only provides for a truly unacceptable background for any democratic process but furthermore discredits the election outcome.

Violent Incidents

In Alexandria, there has been a string of violent occurrences today. In the Mancheya district, a demonstration by supporters of Muslim Brotherhood candidate Mahmoud Atteya who were denied access to the polling station were attacked by security forces and thugs, resulting in four hospitalizations and one fatality. In Al-Montaza district, groups of thugs destroyed six cars, attacked bystanders randomly, and killed one taxi driver. Also, Saif Al-Qaberi, an NDP candidate running in the Mancheya district, was stabbed by a group of thugs. And finally, a group of Muslim Brotherhood supporters broke into the Magri Gergis Church in Al-Amareya district, setting fire to the establishment.

In the first district of Ismaelia, a demonstration by Muslim Brotherhood supporters was severely repressed by police officers who shot into the crowd. There were also thugs present who assaulted the demonstrators with knives and clubs.

In the Qaabuty district of Port Said, a group of thugs assaulted Muslim Brotherhood voters with knives in the Ahad, Tabooty and Saad Zaghoul schools. And in the first district, Ibrahim Saad, a man with history of violent crime, assaulted women and children with a knife and injured a veiled Muslim Brotherhood supporter. In the second district of the same governorate, the police withdrew all of their forces which gave thugs the opportunity to assault opposition supporters, leaving the opposition candidate Mohammed Al-Nazmy injured. There are also reports that there is a roaming group of thugs, traveling in an organized fashion from polling station to polling station, with the intention of threatening and intimidating voters. This is happening without intervention from the police.

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In the Berma district of Gharbia, at Al-Tarbia Al-Fikria School, massive disputes erupted between NDP and Muslim Brotherhood supporters following the decision of the judge to expel all poll-watchers.

In Al-Beharya, Bandar Al-Damanhour district, severe injuries and destruction resulted from fights that broke out among the Muslim Brotherhood supporters of Mohammed Gamal Heshmad and the supporters of the NDP candidate.

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PRESS STATEMENT
INDEPENDENT COMMITTEE FOR ELECTION MONITORING (ICEM)

Sunday, November 20, 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 second round of the election, ICEM has deployed 1500 observers to monitor the voting and counting procedures in 72 electoral districts of 9 governorates where more than 1700 candidates are competing for 144 seats.

Approximately 250 ICEM observers are planning to observe the counting of the ballots. Initial information suggests that unfortunately many of these monitors will continue to be denied access to the counting centers, even though many of them have 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.

In general, ICEM monitors have reported that 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, and inaccurate voters' lists.

Today's elections were marked by a significantly higher level of violence than the previous round. This violence involved mainly supporters for NDP, but also opposition and independent candidates. Since early this morning, ICEM had been receiving reports of violent incidents throughout Egypt. The reports, taken together, reveal a systematic and planned campaign of intimidation against opposition voters, in particular, Muslim Brotherhood supporters and candidates. In addition, there has been little or no effective police intervention or prevention. The day's incidents have ranged from assault and battery to homicide.

ICEM condemns in the strongest possible terms this and all types of violence. Thus far, it has been the violence which has posed the greatest challenge to the fairness of the elections and has severely impeded voters from freely expressing their will. This widespread and systematic violence not only creates a truly unacceptable background for any democratic process but, furthermore, it discredits the final election outcome.

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Voter Turnout

According to initial ICEM reports, a maximum of 17 % of registered voters turned out to vote at the polling stations observed by ICEM. Because ICEM's activities were located primarily in hotly contested polling stations that could be expected to draw out more of the electorate, this estimate could possibly be biased in the upwards direction.

Electoral Violations and Irregularities

Preventing ICEM Monitors from Monitoring the Election

In this second round of elections, far more restrictions have been imposed upon ICEM observers. In the vast majority of polling stations, ICEM observers have been denied entry to observe the voting procedures or have been expelled soon after they managed to enter. Authorities' arbitrary decisions in this matter continue to seriously undermine Egyptian citizens' rights to a fair and transparent electoral process.

Violence

In addition to the cases mentioned in the report titled "Heightened Violence Mars Elections," issued today at 4:00 pm, ICEM has received the following information:

In the Koos district of Qenaa, there were gunshots directed at supporters of Muslim Brotherhood candidate Hisham Al-Qafty from the supporters of NDP candidate Mohammed Mahmoud Aly. Nine injuries have thus far been reported, including one child.

In the Damanhour district of Beharya, fights are still continuing between supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood candidate Mohammed Gamal Hishmat and the NDP candidate Mustafa El-Faqy. It has been reported that there was one fatality and seven injuries.

In the Aboresh district, fights have also taken place. Police fired gunshots and used tear gas in their attempts to disperse the crowd.

In Etay El-Baroud district, supporters of the NDP candidate, Hussein El-Sayrafy, assaulted the supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood candidate Mohammed Al-Gazzar in front of the Iqlisheen polling station. This resulted in one death and several injuries among the supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood candidate.

In the third district of Ismailya, in polling stations 80 and 81, the police assaulted voters and monitors. The police were also responsible for closing the polling stations two hours ahead of the scheduled closing time.

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In the Tanta district of Gharbiya, supporters of the NDP candidate Ahmed Shoubir beat the Muslim Brotherhood candidate at the Said Al- Erian School which initiated a broader fight. Police then closed the polling station for three hours.

In the Berma district of Gharbiya, a fight between supporters of competing NDP candidates Hamdi El-Konayisi and Mohammad Al-Halougi broke out.

Numerous Arrests Made

ICEM observers were amongst those targeted for arrest. In the Derma district, three ICEM observers were arrested as they tried to perform monitoring activities. They were taken to the police station and interrogated for one hour even though they were in possession of cards from the Ministry of Justice accrediting them as observers. In Qontara Sharq district of Ismailya, two ICEM observers were held in custody at Al-Obur School for four hours until the voting had ended.

In the Tanta District of Gharbiya, at the Sayeda Khadeega School, four Muslim Brotherhood supporters were arrested as a consequence of a phone call made directly from the NDP candidate, Ahmed Shoubir. Another twenty-five were arrested in front of polling station number 21.

Also in Gharbiya, the wife of a Muslim Brotherhood candidate, Mahmoud Koleeb, and a number of his supporters were arrested and detained for the entire day.

In the Koseya district of Qanaa, two poll-watchers for the Muslim Brotherhood candidate were arrested at the polling station.

Inaccurate Voters' Lists

Inaccurate voting lists have continued to be a common occurrence in this round of the elections. Numerous reports indicated that voters' lists had been altered. There were also complaints from candidates themselves that the voters' lists used today did not correspond with the official lists they had received prior to the elections. For example, in the Kafre Al-Zayat district, polling station number 69 at the Dabakhshat School, the voters' list was completely different with the end result that not one single person was able to vote there.

Campaigning and Other Violations

ICEM observers report fierce campaigning in the close vicinity of the polling centers by all party and independent candidates. Likewise, NDP, opposition, independent candidate supporters and thugs remained present at the majority of the polling facilities and were intimidating voters. This form of illegal campaigning is one of the factors that continue to incite violence.

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Al-Kerya Church has been campaigning for Mahmoud Sobhy in the first district of Port Said. In return, Mohmoud Sobry made a donation to the church in the amount of L.E. 100,000. This is clearly in violation of the law which forbids government of religious institutions to be involved in any way with campaigning.

In the Tanta district of Gharbiya, supporters of NDP candidate Ahmed Shoubir publicly distributed gifts and food to voters both inside and outside the polling station.

ICEM observers regularly reported incidents where Muslim Brotherhood supporters were denied access to polling stations.

Instances of multiple and group voting were regularly reported from Fayoum, Beharya, and Gharbiya.

In the Berma district of Beharya, at Al-Wahda Baytareya polling station, voting was been conducted without any ID, either personal or electoral.

Lastly, many polling stations were closed periodically throughout the day, and without justifiable reason. For example, this happened in Bandar Al-Fayoum district at polling stations number 44 and 10.

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Monday, November 21, 2005 11:00 am

Election Day Monitoring: The Counting Process

ICEM has fielded 250 monitors to all counting centers to monitor the counting for the first day of the second round of the Parliamentary election in an effort to provide credibility to the election results. Unfortunately, once again the vast majority of these monitors were denied access to the counting centers, even though many of them had official permission from the Egyptian Ministry of Justice. In total, despite the fact that only 12 monitors out of 250 were allowed to monitor counting, they have witnessed serious violations during the counting of the votes.

ICEM views the authorities' arbitrary decision as illegal and also as a decision that undermines the overall transparency, integrity and the credibility of the entire electoral process.

- **Following the consistent violation of the law and with no other option left, ICEM will be addressing Courts filing law-suits against all the authorities, including the polling stations' and counting center' supervisors that have clearly acted against the Administrative Judiciary Court ruling dated November 6, 2005, the legal case number 2726/60 that calls for allowing NGO observers to observe the voting and counting process.**

Widespread Violence and Abuses Undermine the Credibility of the Election Outcome

Despite continues and intensive recommendations and demands from civil society, the Judges' Club, and opposition parties to institute mechanisms which would ensure the transparency and the integrity of the counting process and credibility of the election results; the election authorities at all levels have ignored the obvious deficiencies and intentionally failed to provide any remedies.

The few observers who were able to monitor the counting process again 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 ballot box 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 idea of transparency in every respect. 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, the credibility of the election outcome has been seriously undermined.

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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 to 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 more than one hundred ballot boxes on average being counted in each counting center.

Moreover, transport of the 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.

In the Urba'ine and Ganayan districts of Port Said, ballot boxes from polling stations 71 and 73 were stolen during transport, destroyed and their remnants left in the street.

In the Nakhamady district of Qena the appointed counting center had space for no more than 60 ballot boxes, where space for more than 160 was needed. As a result, many ballot boxes were counted in bathrooms and other rooms inaccessible to independent observation.

In the Damanhour district of Al Bahera, the Muslim Brotherhood candidate Mohamed Gamal Hashmat and his supporters staged a sit-in demanding a recount after the NDP candidate was declared winner in spite of preliminary results to the contrary as claimed by the Moslim Brotherhood poll-watchers. Following these developments, the supervising judge overrode his first decision and announced that there will be a run-off election.

In the Bastion district of Gharbaya, the police officer in charge of transporting the ballot boxes from the polling center at the Bastion Agricultural High School to the counting center vanished with the ballot boxes and arrived more than thirty minutes late to the counting center.

In the Mahal Al-Kobra of Gharbaya, the judge supervising the counting center halted the counting process for over two hours in order to expel all poll-watchers and monitors from the

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building. Once the counting center was cleared of all independent observers, the counting continued in secret until results were announced.

In the Ebshway district of Fayoum, the counting process which was supposed to have taken place at the major polling center of Bandar Ebshway was, at the last minute, transferred to a subsidiary station in Yusef Sadik, the stronghold of NDP candidate Yusef Wali, Minister of Agriculture.

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