



**PRESS STATEMENT**  
**INDEPENDENT COMMITTEE ON ELECTION MONITORING-ICEM**  
**MONITORING THE RUN-OFF FOR THIRD PHASE OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION**

*Wednesday, December 7, 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 Elections. ICEM is aimed at providing for the integrity and the credibility of the election process. In the third phase of the election, ICEM is deploying 1,300 observers to monitor the voting and counting procedures in 68 electoral districts where 254 candidates are contesting 127 seats.

**PRE-ELECTION DAY ASSESSMENT**

State security services and police have continued to arrest numerous Muslim Brotherhood and opposition supporters throughout Egypt in the last 48 hours. ICEM strongly believes that these mass arrests cast doubt on the credibility of government actions during the elections. The arrests also create an environment of fear in which voters feel far less secure in expressing their free will.

In 16 districts of the Dakahleya, Kafr ElShiekh, Qena, Aswan, and ElBahr ElAhmar governorates, Administrative Courts ruled during the last 48 hours that the third round of elections in all of these districts, held on December 1, should be re-conducted. In spite of these rulings, several of these 16 districts are holding run-offs today. ICEM believes that this confusion and the lack of a clear and uniform application of court rulings seriously undermine the integrity of the election process.

**ELECTION DAY MONITORING: THE OPENING OF THE POLLS**

*Observers Beaten, Arrested, and Denied Access to Polling Stations*

The ICEM monitoring effort continues to be impeded by the authorities' arbitrary decisions and actions. Despite continuous cases of obstruction, personal threats, and intimidation; ICEM observers are committed to seeing this mission through, fully confident of fulfilling a patriotic duty for the benefit of democracy in Egypt.

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The vast majority of the ICEM observers were denied access to polling stations to observe the opening of the polls. The authorities' illegal actions in preventing observers to monitor these opening procedures continue to seriously undermine Egypt's citizens' rights to a transparent process.

The ICEM coordinator in Sohag governorate, Yusef Abdel Lattif, was beaten by security forces and his mobile phone was confiscated when he attempted to use it to photograph a violent conflict at the Senawaya Al Askaraya School polling center in the Bandar Sohag district.

ICEM observer, Samir Fadil, was arrested in Tali Al Haween village of Bandar Zagazig district in Sharkaya. In the same village, 5 ICEM observers were beaten by police while trying to pass through a police cordon which has closed off access to the entire village.

ICEM is appalled at the continued obstruction and harassment of its observers by security forces. These actions are in clear violation of the Egyptian courts' ruling to allow independent observers the right to monitor elections, not to mention their human rights.

#### *Reported Arrests of Opposition Candidate Poll-Watchers and Supporters*

In addition to arrests made prior to Election Day, ICEM observers are reporting of systematic arrests of opposition party poll watchers and supporters at polling stations.

Such reports have been received in the Akhmine district of Sohag where 150 supporters of independent candidate Ahmed Raghib were arrested. In Bandar Sohag, 15 poll watchers of the independent candidate Mazen Abul Nour were arrested.

In the Daqalaya governorate, systematic targeting of Muslim Brotherhood poll watchers and supporters has been reported in many districts including Nabrawa, Mansoura and Shaha.

10 Poll watchers of Al Wafd Party candidate Mahmoud Abaza were arrested in Al Taline district of Sharkaya.

In the same district of Sharkaya, candidate Mohamed Ahmed Abul Hag and several of his supporters were arrested.

#### *Polling Centers Late in Opening*

The vast majority of polling facilities observed by the ICEM observers did not open on time. The late openings continue to add to tensions and a generally chaotic environment at the polling centers as crowds of voters await the opening.

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### *Disenfranchisement of Opposition Voters*

ICEM observers continue to report on significant cases of police preventing opposition voters from accessing polling centers. Not only have opposition voters been denied access to polling stations, in some cases they have been prevented from coming within 300 meters of them, or not even allowed to pass police cordons closing off entire villages.

Such reports have been received from the Tira village in the Nabaroh district of Daqalaya, Abu Hariz village in the Kafr Sahr district of Sharqaya, the Ibrahimaya district of Sharkaya, in Al Arish district of North Sinai, as well as the Bandar Domiate in Damitta and Al Deerat districts in Sohag.

### *Violence*

There have been reports of violence in Atmida, Shaha, and Nabaroh districts of Daqalaya; in the Diarb and Ibrahimaya and Zakazik districts of Sharqaya; and the Bandar Sohag district of Sohag.

In many cases, violence has occurred as a result of voters being denied access to polling stations. Discontented protesters have gather in areas where police blockades have been created. Security forces have used tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse these crowds.

### *Campaigning*

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 remain present at the majority of the polling facilities.

***Independent Committee for  
Election Monitoring  
ICEM***

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**PRESS STATEMENT**  
**INDEPENDENT COMMITTEE ON ELECTION MONITORING-ICEM**  
**MONITORING THE RUN-OFF FOR THIRD PHASE OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION**

*Wednesday, December 7, 2005 5:00PM*

Since early this morning, ICEM had been receiving reports of violent incidents throughout Egypt. Reports reveal a systematic and planned campaign to prevent opposition voters from going to the polls. This led to large demonstrations which then in turn were severely repressed with the use of excessive force on the part of the security forces. The day's toll is currently six fatalities and dozens of injuries. 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 unfolded, it became obvious that security force interventions have been fully committed to obstructing opposition parties and voters from participating in the election. These organized acts of violence and repression not only provide for a truly unacceptable background for any democratic process but furthermore discredit the election outcome.

*Violent Incidents*

In the Bandar Damitta and Faraskor districts of Damitta, security forces used massive amounts of force to disperse crowds, numbering in the thousands, in an action that left three dead. The crowds had gathered outside protesting numerous polling-station closings. Police then resorted to using rubber bullets, tear gas and other hazardous chemicals. In some instances, the security forces shot into the crowds using snipers positioned on the top of nearby buildings.

In Tileen district of Sharqiah, the police also employed force against demonstrators, using rubber bullets and tear gas. One boy was killed and dozens injured. In the Zaqazeeq district, two people died and four ICEM observers and the independent candidate, Lutfy Sheehata, have been hospitalized after having been assaulted. In Daqahleya, fights are continuing in Shaha, Sherbeen and Atmeeda districts. This has already left one small girl in critical condition as well as resulted in several others having been injured.

In Bandar Suhag district of Suhag, thousands are participating in a peaceful sit-in demonstration in front of the court house of Suhag. The demonstration is in protest of the disenfranchisement of many voters as well as the excessive use of force by security forces which left many injured. One of the injured has been hospitalized and is in critical condition.

In the Qaleen district of Kafr Shiekh, thousands of voters gathered outside polling-stations throughout the day as they were denied entry. At 3:00 pm, they broke into the polling-station, took the ballots and the boxes, and then proceeded to throw them into the street. This happened at Altegara ElThanaweya for Girls, Althanaweya Elsenaeaya School, and AlMogamma ElZeraae Polling Centers. This same scenario is being repeated at Al-Sawa district where thousands of disenfranchised voters are currently protesting.

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**Election Marred by Fatalities**

*Wednesday, December 7, 2005 8:00 PM*

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 third phase of the election, ICEM is deploying 1,300 observers to monitor the voting and counting procedures in 68 electoral districts where 254 candidates are contesting 127 seats.

**ICEM preliminary findings suggest a further exacerbation of the numerous election violations already present in the first two rounds. In this round of the election, the severe use of violence reached a critical point. Police forces were no longer just targeting opposition supporters but were lashing out at people in general. Today's losses suffered, in terms of human life and dignity, have been the greatest witnessed so far in these elections. It therefore comes as no surprise that voter turn-out today is estimated to be only 8%. ICEM is seriously questioning why Egypt even held elections if the government is so adamant about preventing voters from casting their votes. Likewise, it has been pointless for the government to announce that it will allow domestic monitoring when in fact it has regularly used all means available to it (obstructing access, intimidation, and organized violence) to eliminate any meaningful monitoring activity. Today marks the culmination of their progressive efforts to undermine the entire election process. In doing so, they have also shattered any hope for the credibility of the results.**

In addition, the electoral process has been marred by other serious and widespread violations that have added to the withering credibility and integrity of the election. These violations include politically motivated arrests, vote-buying and inaccuracies with the voters' lists.

**ELECTION DAY MONITORING: THE VOTING PROCESS AND THE CLOSING OF THE POLLS**

Unfortunately, most of ICEM's monitors continued to be denied access to the counting centers even though many of them have official permission from the Egyptian Ministry of Justice. ICEM is disappointed with the fact that the vast majority of the authorities never complied with the law and allowed 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.

**VOTER TURNOUT**

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According to ICEM reports, 8% of registered voters successfully cast their ballots at the polling stations being monitored by ICEM. ICEM believes that the rapid escalation of violence and the organized disenfranchisement of large segments of the population that resulted from police cordons are directly responsible for the sudden drop in voter turnout in comparison with the first round.

## **ELECTORAL VIOLATIONS AND IRREGULARITIES**

### *ICEM Observers Beaten, Harassed and Prevented from Monitoring the Election*

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

For the third time in one week, the ICEM coordinator for the Suhag governorate, Yussef Abdel-Latif, was beaten, this time while trying to photograph an ongoing violent dispute.

ICEM coordinator of Meet Ghamr City, Magdi Darwish, was assaulted and the windshield of his car was destroyed by security forces as he tried to enter some of the closed-off areas in the Admeeda district.

### *Violence*

In addition to the incidents mentioned in today's earlier press statements, ICEM continued to receive numerous reports of violence spreading, almost exclusively in districts where opposition candidates were seeking seats (Damitta, Daqahleya, Sharqiah, North Sinai, and Suhag).

In Bandar Suhag district of Suhag, supporters of the independent candidate Mazen Abdel-Nour engaged in destructive and vandalistic activities, including setting fire to a gas station in Shaa City, 15 kilometers away.

In Al-Ariesh district of North Sinai, security forces intervened in a violent dispute. Twelve people were hospitalized because of their exposure to tear gas. One of them is in critical condition.

Also, a new fatality has been added to the list as the young girl, who was earlier reported as being in critical condition following violence in the Teira district of Daqahleya, has died in a hospital.

According to unconfirmed information, the number of fatalities in Damitta has increased from three to seven. Police forces have surrounded the local hospital and are preventing and leak of information regarding the number of injuries or fatalities which resulted from today's violence.

### *Numerous Arrests Made*

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In addition to the numerous arrests made prior to Election Day, ICEM observers reported continuous cases of arrests of opposition and independent candidate supporters in areas where they have traditional strongholds, mainly in the governorates of Daqahleya, Zaqazeeq Dammiat and Kafr Shiekh.

### *Massive Disenfranchisement*

At a large number of the polling stations in districts where opposition candidates were running massive security forces in front of the polling stations effectively cordoned off the polling station to potential voters. In other cases, security forces closed off larger areas extending beyond the immediate vicinity of the polling centers, even sometimes surrounding whole villages. In these cases, the security forces only granted free passage to NDP supporters.

ICEM views that this continuing and systematic interference of police forces in the election in favor of the ruling party is a flagrant violation of the principles governing a free and fair election and continues to discredit the whole process. ICEM believes that the role of the security forces should be limited to ensuring the safety of the voting process and not interfering in favor of or against any of the parties involved.

### *Vote-Buying*

In the Bandar Gergah district of Suhag, supporters of the NDP candidate Mahmoud Attah and the independent candidate Tariq Abdel-Azim were publicly involved in a vote-buying in front of the Sinaaeya Eltougareya School. In the Akhmeen district, the NDP candidate delivered a large amount of money for the family leaders in the area to encourage them to make their dependents vote for the NDP.

### *Other Violations*

ICEM observers report fierce campaigning in the close vicinity of the polling centers by all party and independent candidates.

ICEM observers also reported that many opposition and Muslim Brotherhood candidate poll-watchers were denied access to the polling-stations.

Inaccurate voting lists continue to be a common occurrence in this round of the election. Numerous reports indicate that voter lists do not contain many names eligible voters all the while including the names of deceased voters and incomplete names.

### **Independent Committee for Election Monitoring (ICEM)**

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