

be the case in Bahrain. Opposition groups complained of "gerrymandering" electoral constituencies, stating that constituencies should be relatively equal in population to provide all voters equal opportunity to influence the choice of representatives. Disparities of this type proved to be a matter of substantial controversy. They also complained that the redistricting process was not been transparent and that the authorities did not seek citizen's participation/input.

The five municipal councils are to be in charge of 25 civic services related mainly to roads regulations, beaches and parks, store sign and outdoor commercial ads, public markets and slaughterhouses, regulating hotels and restaurants, regulating construction and demolition licensing, protecting the environment, and most importantly, discussing and approving the municipal budget. Many Bahrainis considered these services menial and opposition groups complained the actual amount of power that these councils will wield is less extensive than it should be.

Although candidates were provided with a printout list of the voters in their constituencies, the Election Commission did not release the total number of voters in each constituency. The number of cast votes also varied significantly, ranging from a low of 180 votes (constituency #8-Southern Governorate) to a high of 7,853 (second round, constituency #4 in Central Governorate). In each district, 50% of the cast votes plus one determined the winning candidate. If no candidate received more than 50% of the vote on May 9, the two candidates with the highest percentages proceeded to a second round run-off on May 16. The number of candidates competing in each electoral constituency varied widely, ranging from unopposed candidates (constituencies #5 and #10 in Southern Governorate) to a high of eighteen candidates (constituency #3 in Muharraq Governorate).

II ELECTION CAMPAIGNING

Despite the fact that the election to the municipal councils was the first opportunity to select constituent representatives in Bahrain since 1956, the government launched no large scale voter education programs and media coverage did not provide enough information to enable Bahrainis to make informed choices, nor were citizens adequately advised of their civic responsibility to vote.¹ Nevertheless, Bahrain's four major Arabic and English daily newspapers-*ALAYAM*, *AKHBAR ALKHALEEJ*, *BAHRAIN TRIBUNE AND GULF DAILY NEWS* did devote complete sections to election coverage, and Bahraini television and radio broadcast several election-related programs, including candidate fora. The election commission also published a listing of all the candidates with their *curriculum vitae* and electoral platforms through its website, www.bahraintoday.net.

In addition, the candidates themselves supplied the voters with significant amounts of information. Posters, billboards and banners adorned major intersections

¹ This was in marked contrast to the run-up to the vote on the 2001 National Referendum when there was a huge publicity blitz extolling Bahrainis to do their civic duty by turning out at the polls in great numbers.

throughout Bahrain. Many candidates printed leaflets that outlined their platforms and qualifications. These leaflets were distributed to potential voters at *Matam*, social gatherings, and at mosques. Many candidates undertook serious efforts to meet with potential voters, including placing newspaper advertisements, inviting voters to open-houses, setting up tents in public places which were staffed by the candidates or their campaign managers, and, in some cases, campaigning door-to-door.

Lacking any campaign finance laws, wealthier candidates were able to afford a more prominent public profile in their campaigns. Unofficial reports suggested that some candidates spent between 2,000-50,000 Bahraini Dinars (roughly \$5,500-\$135,000) on their campaigns.

III ELECTION DAY

NDI's three-person team, accompanied by members of the BTS, visited 15 of the 50 polling places on election day in the first round (Northern Governorate, constituencies #1,4; Muharraq Governorate, constituencies #2,3,7,8,9; Central Governorate, constituencies 3,5,6,7,9; Capital Governorate, constituencies #1,4,6) and 9 of the 20 polling places in the second round (Muharraq Governorate, constituencies #2,3,7,8,9; Central Governorate, constituencies 3,4; Capital Governorate, constituencies #5,6,7) and gained an impression of the electoral procedures in those constituencies.

Polling places opened at 8:00 AM and closed at 6:00 PM. Exit polls conducted by the Election Commission found that voters would prefer 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM timings. All 50 polling places were headquartered in public schools and clearly designated from the outside as polling places. Each polling place that the NDI delegation visited had separate entrances for men and women but was not partitioned. Each polling place had several booths and ballot boxes. A three-member election committee oversaw the voting in each polling place and was aided by several election officials.

The electoral process at the polling places visited by the NDI team appeared to be well organized with little obvious opportunity for to commit electoral fraud. The NDI team did not see or hear about any allegations of ballot stuffing, theft of ballot boxes, violence or official interference. However, many unauthorized people in and around the polling stations created the impression of influencing or pressuring the voters, especially the elderly and illiterate voters. Distribution of campaign material and the presence of campaign tents right next to the entrances to the polling stations intimidated many voters, who complained to the authorities. Some candidates alleged incidents of favors being offered to voters such as paying voters' electric bills or promising scholarships, mass wedding gifts or trips to Mecca, the Holy City. Women and liberal groups complained about religious leaders denigrating and soiling the reputations of women and liberal candidates.

Upon entering the polling place, the voter was required to present a personal identification card. This identification card was scanned through computers that checked if the voter was registered to vote at the polling place. Voters without the appropriate

identification card were not allowed to receive a ballot even if their names appeared on the list of registered voters. In the first round, veiled women were not asked to uncover their faces to verify their identities, but identity checks were enforced in the second round. Voters then proceeded to a polling booth, which ensured privacy, and marked their ballots. Voters then placed their vote in the ballot box after an official checked off the voter's name from a list printed near the ballot box.

Candidates were able to closely witness the empty ballot boxes at the beginning of the polls and the emptying of the boxes before the counting started. However, despite the electoral law stipulation that candidates or their representatives could witness the count, candidates or their representatives were not allowed to witness the sorting and the counting of the ballots and were kept almost 40 feet away in some polling stations during the count. In one constituency, candidates reported that they were asked to leave the polling station for the initial sort.

The ballots were counted in the polling place without close observations of the candidates or the candidates' representatives. Candidates were also not informed about the results at the polling station before ballots were taken to a central location for official announcements, and were not permitted to accompany the ballot boxes. The NDI and BTS team observed the counting of the ballots at one constituency from afar for a short period of time and were not allowed to enter other polling stations during the counting. Notwithstanding the limitations on candidate's ability to witness the ballot counting, the NDI and BTS team did not hear of any allegations that the vote count was manipulated to favor a candidate or group. Indeed, the NDI team did not hear about any allegations of electoral fraud. To the extent that there were allegations of anecdotal irregularities, those reports did not point to any systematic problems that would have affected the outcome of the elections.

IV CONCLUSIONS

The electoral process at the polling places visited by the NDI team appeared to be well organized with little obvious opportunity for electoral fraud. The NDI team did not see or hear about any allegations of ballot stuffing, theft of ballot boxes, violence or official interference. In fact, on the surface, the municipal council elections process was smooth and quite impressive; election day itself was managed flawlessly. While there were some issues relating to the mechanical process, there were no serious allegations of fraud or distortion of the outcome through cheating.

The real issues relating to the process, however, are more fundamental and include: the manner in which constituency boundaries were drawn; the prohibition on the role of political parties and political societies; and, the degree of power that will be accorded to the elected councils. Another sobering fact is that religious leaders actively campaigned against women and secular candidates and perhaps partly as a result no women candidates and no secular candidates even made it out of the first round.

The real significance of these issues is the question of how they will be dealt with or influence the elections for the National Assembly in October 2002. For those elections, the question of how much power will be given to the elected body is central. Opposition leaders complain that the elected National Assembly chamber under the new Constitution will be less powerful than the appointed Chamber. They also argue that the power arrangement under the new Constitution will represent less democracy than was enjoyed in Bahrain in the early 1970s or contemplated by the National Referendum in 2001. The real debate among political elites in Bahrain now is whether the opening being offered by the 2002 electoral process is wide enough to embrace. The consensus of the NDI team, however, was that the opening is meaningful and could, but will not necessarily, be the first step towards genuine democratization.

Similarly, the manner in which the constituency boundaries were drawn in the municipal elections process was problematic. If a similar approach, with substantially different sized constituencies and constituencies drawn in ways that do not appear to reflect the make-up of the country, is taken in the National Assembly context, opposition leaders will likely protest.

It can also be expected that opposition leaders will press for the right to organize or operate as political parties in the National Assembly elections. While there is an argument for nonpartisan elections for local office, that argument weakens significantly for national elections, where the need to organize on a large scale around major public policy issues naturally requires party formations.

Finally, women and secular candidates were soundly defeated. Their defeat, however, does not appear to be the result of any flaw in the process in that women and secular candidates campaigned vigorously and appeared to have the same opportunities to succeed as other candidates. They faced opposition, including from religious leaders, but the results appear to have arisen more from cultural roots than electoral system flaws.

APPENDIX B

Polling stations visited by the NDI Team

Round One

North

Constituency #1
Constituency #2
Constituency #3
Constituency #4
Constituency #5

Capital

Constituency #1
Constituency #4

Central

Constituency #2
Constituency #9

Muharraq

Constituency #1
Constituency #2
Constituency #3
Constituency #5
Constituency #4
Constituency #7
Constituency #8

South

General Polling Stations

Seef Mall
Diplomatic Quarter
Riffa
Awali Club
Airport
Muharraq Club
Causeway

Round 2

North

Constituency #2
Constituency #4
Constituency #7

Capital

Constituency #2
Constituency #4
Constituency #7

Central

Muharraq

Constituency #2
Constituency #4
Constituency #7

South

Constituency #1
Constituency #3

General Polling Stations

Riffa
Awali Club
Muharraq Club
Salmaniya Hospital
Mina Salman Port
Diplomatic Quarter
Seef Mall
Airport

APPENDIX C

Comparison of the number of registered voters in Muharraq and the Northern Governorate

Although unscientific, it is possible to obtain a rough estimate of the discrepancy in the number of voters in the various governorates. The official participation figures in the first round were released by governorate; using this percentage and the total number of valid ballots cast by governorate,¹ one can deduce the approximate number of voters per governorate.

NDI chose to compare the registered voter breakdown in Muharraq and the Northern governorates for two following reasons:

1. Muharraq is predominantly Sunni and the North is predominantly Shia; it is widely alleged by the opposition that the Sunni dominated areas were favored in the allocation of parliamentary seats.
2. In neither of these governorates was a candidate elected unopposed, thus it is possible to accurately count the number of ballots in each constituency. This is important because it is still unclear how the number of voters in the unopposed districts were factored into the overall participation figure (it has been alleged that those districts were counted as having participated at a rate of 100 percent, but this has not been confirmed).²

In the first round, 29,588 people cast valid ballots in Muharraq. With a participation rate of 70.35 percent, the number of registered voters is thus approximately 42,058. Based on the NDI team's observation of the count, the boycott was not a significant issue in this area, so it is safe to assume that not many people in Muharraq cast spoiled ballots; therefore, the total number of registered voters is unlikely to be appreciably higher than the figure given here.

By contrast, 25,475 people cast valid ballots in the North. With a participation rate of 38.30 percent, the number of registered voters is thus approximately 66,514. As the NDI team witnessed, however, there was a large number of spoiled ballots, thus likely increasing the total number of registered voters.

While NDI cannot speculate as to the exact number of spoiled ballots and their effect on the total participation rate, there appear to be least 24,000 more voters in the North than in Muharraq, but the North received only one more seat than Muharraq. This means that each Member of Parliament (MP) in Muharraq represents approximately 5,257 voters, while in the North, each MP represents 7,390 voters. Most established democracies

¹ All valid vote totals are based on figures released in the 26 October 2002 edition of the *Gulf Daily News*.

² According to figures compiled by BTS and BHRS, the number of spoiled ballots is approximately 16,000. The organizations calculated this number based on the released number of ballots for each candidate in each constituency, subtracting that total from the overall voter participation figure provided by the government.

choose to keep disparities between districts at less than 10 percent, and certainly less than 20 percent. Looking at the above comparison, however, the discrepancies between districts in Bahrain may be as high as 40 percent.

APPENDIX D

BAHRAIN: Members of Parliament (11/01/02)

<u>Name</u>	<u>Governate</u>	<u>Constituency</u>	<u>Party Association/Other Notes</u>
Saadi Mohammed Abdulla Ali	Capital	1	Islamic Forum
Isa Hassan Bin Rajab	Capital	2	
Dr. Ibrahim Yousif Al Abdulla	Capital	3	Mithaq al Watani
Abdulahadi Ahmed Marhoon	Capital	4	Al Tajamor al Watani (pro-government Shia)
Hassan Eid Rashid Bukhamas	Capital	5	Shura
Ahmed Ibrahim Mahmood Bahzad	Capital	6	Independent (supported by Islamic Forum)
Yousif Hussain Ahmed Al Hermi	Capital	7	supported by Asaalah
Abdulla Jaffer Al A'ali	Capital	8	
Fareed Ghazi Rafie	Central	1	
Abdulnabi Salman Nasser	Central	2	
Jehad Hassan Ibrahim	Central	3	
Dr. Salah Ali Mohammed Abdulrahman	Central	4	President of Islamic Forum (unopposed)
Ahmed Hussain Abbas	Central	5	Rabita
Mohammed Abdulla Al Abbas	Central	6	Rabita
Ali Mohammed Abdulla Mattar	Central	7	Asaalah
Abdulateef Ahmed Al Shaikh Saleh	Central	8	Islamic Forum
Khalifa Ahmed Kalifa Al Dhahrani	Central	9	
Dr. Isa Jassim Al Mutawa	Muharrag	1	Asaalah
Abdulaziz Jalal Al Meer	Muharrag	2	Islamic Forum
Ali Ahmed Ai	Muharrag	3	Islamic Forum
Isa Ahmed Ali	Muharrag	4	Asaalah
Adel Abdulrahman Al Moawda	Muharrag	5	President of Asaalah
Ali Mohammed Al Samahiji	Muharrag	6	
Othman Mohammed Sharif Al Rayes	Muharrag	7	Shura
Ghanim Fadel Al Buainain	Muharrag	8	Asaalah
Jassim Ahmed Abdulkarim Al Saeedi	Southern	1	Sunni Islamist
Hamad Khalil Al Mohanadi	Southern	2	Asaalah
Sami Moshen Al Buhairy	Southern	3	naturalized Syrian
Abdulla Khalaf Rashid Al Dosari	Southern	4	

Mohammed Ibrahim Al Kabi	Southern	5	
Mohammed Faihan Saleh Dosari	Southern	6	
Mohammed Hussain Al Khayat	Northern	1	Rabita
Jassim Mohammed Al Mawali	Northern	2	
Samir Abdulla Al Showaikh	Northern	3	
Abdulaziz Abdulla Al Moosa	Northern	4	
Abbas Hassan Salman	Northern	5	
Mohammed Khalid Mohammed	Northern	6	Islamic Forum
Yousif Zain Al Abedeen Zainal	Northern	7	Al Tajamor al Watani (liberal)
Ahmed Abdulla Haji	Northern	8	
Jassim Hassan Abdula'al	Northern	9	won by challenge

Islamic Forum (a relatively moderate Sunni Islamic society): 6 MPs and supports one additional MP

Asaalah (a fundamentalist Sunni Islamist society): 6 MPs and supports one additional MP

Rabita al Islami (a pro-government Shia society): 3 MPs

Shura Society (a relatively pro-government Sunni Islamist society): 2 MPs

Al Tajamor al Watani (National Democtaric Assembly) (a mostly Shia secular society): 2 MPs

Mithaq al Watani (National Charter Society) (a pro-government liberal, mostly Shia society): 1 MP

