



United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI)
بعثة الأمم المتحدة لمساعدة العراق (يونامي)

Iraq's Electoral Preparations and Processes - Report No. 9
Baghdad, 02 July 2021

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Highlights for May-June

- IHEC shared candidate vetting documentation with relevant Ministries and the Accountability and Justice Commission.
- Decisions issued by IHEC on disqualified candidates, several appeals submitted at the Electoral Judicial Panel.
- IHEC plans to set up 55,041 regular polling stations in 8,273 regular polling centres on election day; the number of special voting and IDP polling locations being finalized.
- Online recruitment process for more than 300,000 polling staff ongoing.
- Training of trainers on electronic devices started; 1st level completed with 2nd level at GEOs scheduled next.
- Audit company shared first two reports on the audit of the technologies, IHEC and technology provider are addressing audit findings.
- IHEC signed the contract for the printing of ballot papers.
- Public outreach and awareness plan developed to launch IHEC outreach campaign.
- 48 proposals from 32 CSOs selected under the CSOs small grants project on electoral awareness.
- IHEC held a conference with heads of political parties, coalitions and candidates to brief them on ongoing electoral preparations, voting procedures, and guidelines for upcoming campaign period.
- Election Supreme Security Committee continues its periodic meetings and site visits to governorates.

Candidate Verification and Finalization of Candidate Lists

After the completion of the candidate submission period on 1 May, IHEC shared the documentation of candidates with the relevant institutions to vet the candidates' background according to the eligibility criteria stipulated in the electoral law. Based on feedback received from the institutions, IHEC issued decisions on the exclusion of candidates who failed to fulfil the eligibility criteria. IHEC announced that 5 candidates were excluded based on feedback from the Integrity Commission, 22 candidates were

* This report, the ninth in a series, is prepared pursuant to UN Security Council Resolutions 2576 (2021) and 2522 (May 2020). In extending UNAMI's mandate, the Council instructs that the Special Representative of the Secretary General and UNAMI shall: "further advise, assist and support the Government of Iraq and the Independent High Electoral Commission with efforts to plan and execute genuinely free and fair Iraqi-led, Iraqi-owned elections and referenda, including through regular technical reviews and detailed reporting on electoral preparations and processes, as part of the Secretary-General's regular reporting cycle".



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excluded for not meeting the educational qualifications, 5 candidates for being affiliated with the Ministry of Defence, 15 candidates for being active members of the Iraqi security forces and 40 candidates based on responses from the Directorate of Criminal Investigation. The Accountability and Justice Commission (AJC) also provided a list of 226 candidates to be excluded. However, on 22 June, the AJC decision was overturned by the Court of Cassation.

IHEC is in the final stages of the candidate verification process. The period for withdrawal of candidacies, either by individual candidates or candidates nominated by political parties and coalitions, took place between 13-20 June with a total of 103 candidates opting to withdraw their nomination.

The electoral law provides an opportunity for candidates to appeal against IHEC decisions at the Electoral Judicial Panel (EJP). The EJP is a body composed of 3 first-class judges convened to adjudicate appeals against IHEC decisions. More than 60 appeals have been lodged with the EJP. Of these, the EJP decided to overturn the IHEC decision in 9 of the cases, while sustaining the IHEC decision in 20 other cases. The remainder are pending adjudication.

Considering the withdrawals and exclusions, the IHEC database as of 30 June consists of 3,413 candidates, inclusive of candidates for the component seats. Of the total, 963, or 28.2%, are female candidates. These numbers may still change as appeals are decided.

Polling Staff Recruitment and Training

On 23 May, IHEC commenced the online process for the recruitment of polling staff that will serve on election day. More than 300,000 staff will be required for the purpose. IHEC is prioritizing the recruitment of current government employees as well as university students and graduates of voting age. The online application is accessible through the IHEC website and runs until the 1st of August. As of 30 June, around 600,000 applications had been received online. However, field reports indicate that there are still a low number of applications received in certain areas considered remote and of security concern.

Preparations have also started for the conduct of polling staff training on election day procedures using the cascade methodology. IHEC will utilize a multi-level training of trainers approach to train the more than 300,000 personnel that will be recruited for election day duties. A preparatory workshop on poll workers cascade training took place in Erbil on 23-27 May

On 25-28 June, IHEC also organized the first level training for its governorate electoral office staff on the electronic devices. These devices, including the voter verification devices, results acceleration devices and the results transmission system, are to be used at the polling stations on polling day.



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Finalization of Voters List and Polling Center Planning

IHEC is finalizing the distribution of voters to polling stations. The final voter list as it stands, contains 25,226,400 voters. Of these, 24,029,931 are regular voters who will vote on the election day on 10 October. In addition, there are 1,076,345 so-called special voters, primarily from various Iraqi Security Forces, who will vote on the special voting day on 8 October.

IHEC announced that it will set up 55,041 regular polling stations in a total of 8,273 regular polling centres countrywide on election day. The number of polling centres and polling stations for special voting is yet to be finalized.

IHEC records also show a total of 120,124 registered IDP voters for which similar planning is ongoing to set up IDP polling facilities.



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Audit of the Results Management IT System

The audit of the results management IT system is ongoing. Hensoldt, the IHEC-contracted audit company, submitted two reports on the audit process. The reports indicate 42 specific findings regarding the systems and provided recommendations which were shared with IHEC and its technology providers for corresponding action.

On 23 June, IHEC met with representatives of the audit company, Hensoldt, the technology provider, Miru, and UNAMI to discuss progress regarding the audit of the election technologies and the actions being taken by the technology provider to address the audit findings.

Public Outreach Activities

IHEC has finalized the public outreach and awareness plan which was prepared with UNAMI inputs. The plan identifies the activities and materials to be produced to inform and mobilize voters and to encourage their active participation in the election. The plan will be implemented between June and October 2021. It covers key thematic areas of the electoral process and targets all voters, youth and first-time voters, women, people with disabilities, minorities and socially excluded individuals, IDPs and returnees, special voting and political parties.

The evaluation of proposals for the CSOs small grants project on electoral awareness has been completed. There are 48 proposals from 32 CSOs which have been successfully selected to cover all 18 Governorates. An IHEC briefing session for these 32 CSOs was conducted on 28-30 June in preparation for the launch of the CSO activities.

On 30 June, IHEC organized a conference with the heads of political parties, alliances and individual candidates to inform them on various aspects of electoral preparations. This is the second such conference organized by IHEC. IHEC officials gave presentations on the status of preparations, the relevant regulations and procedures, types of voting cards, IDP voting, the electronic devices and comparison between the 2018 and 2020 procedures. The procedures for ballot lottery and the guidelines for the upcoming campaign period were also discussed.

Ballot Lottery Process

IHEC is preparing to conduct the ballot lottery process to assign candidate numbers and determine the order of candidates as they appear on the ballot papers. The plan is for the lottery to take place in all 19 governorate electoral offices on 7 July, as soon as the final candidate lists for all the constituencies are approved.

The procedures for conducting the ballot lottery, which were prepared with UNAMI support in coordination with the IHEC Candidate Nomination Section, have been finalized. Based on the approved



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procedures, IHEC has conducted a training session in Baghdad for its governorate electoral office staff who will be involved in organizing the ballot lottery in their respective areas. The ballot lottery machines, procured with UN support, have all arrived and are now distributed to the governorates.

Results Display Centres at GEO Level

On 21 June, UNAMI shared with IHEC the concept of transparent result display centres at the GEO level. This is further to IHEC and OEA discussions on modalities to display results in a quick and transparent manner in a visible and accessible location in all GEOs on election day.

The initial plan is to have a result display centre in each of the 19 IHEC GEOs capable of displaying election results from polling stations. A national media centre in Baghdad will also display results at the national level.

Meeting Organized by the Presidency Office on Electoral Preparations

On 29 June, the President of Iraq hosted a meeting attended by IHEC Commissioners, UNAMI and the Prime Minister's adviser on elections to discuss certain topics related to ongoing electoral preparations. The President provided recommendations and heard the views of IHEC, UNAMI and the PM electoral adviser on issues relating to the use of short-term voter cards, continuation of biometric voter registration, electronic and manual counting, and the announcement and publication of results.

Invitations for international observation

IHEC has so far received very few responses to the invitation for international observation that was sent to embassies and international organizations. Based on latest IHEC information, only 10 embassies have responded to the invitation letter. IHEC subsequently provided the necessary observer accreditation documentation, which only two embassies have completed and submitted thus far. IHEC requested UNAMI support for further follow-up with these embassies and organizations, and for the topic to be included in discussions during briefing meetings with the diplomatic community in Iraq.

Election Complaints and Appeals

On 29 June, the IHEC Board of Commissioners approved the complaints and appeals procedures. The procedures include the formation of several committees, with IHEC and UNAMI electoral staff participating, that will be responsible to categorize and review complaints. Trained complaints staff will



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determine whether a complaint meets all the formal requirements and, if so, whether it could have an impact on the vote count, for example in the event of fraud. Such cases will be handled on a priority basis.

Information and Communication Technology

Upon IHEC's request, a training course for selected IT staff on manual tabulation was implemented with UNAMI support. This is to enable these IHEC IT staff to develop the systems and software to be used for the data entry and tabulation results for polling stations that were manually recounted on polling day. The first version of the manual tabulation software has already been developed as of 24 June.

Based on the electoral law, manual counting will take place at a rate of one polling station for each polling centre. If the results of the manual count do not match the result of the electronic count for that station, and the discrepancy is more than 5%, then all the polling stations in that polling centre will be manually counted.

Two versions of an Android-based application to collect geographic information system (GIS) for electoral locations have been developed with the support of UNAMI electoral IT experts. Based on this, IHEC launched the GIS data collection activity to map voter registration centres (VRCs) initially and then will also include polling centres as the activity progresses. So far, Basra is leading in VRC location collection with 66 out of 76 coordinates collected (86% completion rate).

Procurement

On 31 May, IHEC signed the contract for the printing of ballot papers and result forms with German security printing company Giesecke + Devrient Current Technology GMBH. Due to the large volume of printing materials and with an implementation timeline of 60 days, the printing will take place in two locations: Germany and Belgium, due to start on 20 July 2021. It is expected that all materials will be delivered to Iraq by 20 September 2021. The plan is to receive these sensitive electoral materials in the four Iraqi airports: Baghdad, Najaf, Erbil and Basra. IHEC staff will receive the ballot papers and transport them to IHEC warehouses for storage and preparations for delivery to polling centres in advance of election day.

IHEC is sending a delegation to visit the facilities of the contractor for the printing of ballot papers and forms. The contractor has provided a proposed agenda for the visit, scheduled for the 1st week of July, to see the printing premises, approve the first sample of the ballot paper, and to test it with the electronic devices.

On 22 June, IHEC and Miru signed the contract for the development of the fingerprint software. A meeting was also held with Hensoldt to clarify the timeline to audit the software once ready, together with the other IHEC technologies involved in the results management process.



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COVID-19 countermeasures

The IHEC Committee for COVID-19 Safety & Prevention Measures continue to work on the measures that will be implemented for the electoral process. IHEC has also approved the annex to the polling procedures and manual which will cover COVID-19 safety measures during the polling process. IHEC has also formed sub-committees at the IHEC governorate electoral offices to coordinate activities. Several informational posters have been developed for printing and distribution.

Election Security

The Supreme Security Committee for Elections continued to hold its periodic meetings. On 24 May, the Security Committee, IHEC Commissioners and IHEC GEO Managers held an expanded meeting on the security plan for the elections. They discussed ongoing preparations to secure the electoral process, including the movement of personnel and materials, the security of various electoral locations, including warehouses for storage of electoral materials, and to facilitate the movement of voters and issues relating to the security of various electoral actors. The preparation of security plans in each governorate was also discussed in coordination with the IHEC GEO directors and governorate security officials, who were also present in the meeting.

In a meeting between the UN Election Security Advisor and the Head of the Supreme Security Committee for Elections on 22 May, the latter mentioned that certain security arrangements would be in place to support the movement of UN personnel on election day.

On 22 June, the Security Committee meeting agenda included several presentations made by the sub-committees on current security and logistical challenges faced by the IHEC GEOs. They also provided updates on the latest security preparations. The Committee further heard a report prepared by a senior committee member from his recent visits to the northern governorates.

GEO Preparations

On 10 May, IHEC HQ officials visited the governorate electoral office (GEO) in Kirkuk to discuss ongoing activities, challenges faced by the Kirkuk office, and ways to address them within the administrative and legal parameters. Based on the findings and recommendations from this field visit, the IHEC Chairman issued an order on management changes in Kirkuk, including the replacement of the GEO Manager and the establishment of a technical committee to oversee the work of the governorate office. The committee is composed of 3 individuals as members, with 1 UN international electoral staff included as an adviser. Several representatives of political parties, particularly from the Iraqi Turkmen Front, came out publicly against this IHEC decision. UNAMI reached out to these political groups to gain a clearer understanding of their concerns.



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IHEC has also issued instructions to its governorate electoral offices to follow up closely on the recruitment of polling staff and to establish Polling Staff Recruitment Sub-Committees in each GEO. The GEOs have likewise received fund allocations to implement locally-tailored public outreach strategies and activities.

UNAMI Regional Electoral Operations Advisers continued their field visits and maintained regular contacts with IHEC governorate officials in relation to ongoing electoral preparations. These include updates on the status of polling centre lists, storage facilities, recruitment of staff, distribution of voter cards and public outreach activities.

Note: UNAMI reminds all stakeholders that electoral preparations must remain free from political interference at all stages. This independence is essential to build public trust in the elections and their outcome.