



بنیاد انتخابات شفاف افغانستان  
د افغانستان درنو ټاکنو بنسټ

Transparent Election Foundation of Afghanistan

---

## *TEFA's Preliminary Election Observation Report on the 2019 Presidential Election*

---

### **Preamble:**

According to article 61 of the Afghan constitution, Presidential election takes place between the months of Hamal and Sawr in the final year of the incumbent president's term, and the new president should occupy the office by the beginning of the month of Jawza. It was decided first by IEC's newly appointed commissioners to deliver the presidential election on July.20<sup>th</sup>.2019, but on account of inadequate preparation, the 2019 presidential election was postponed for September.28<sup>th</sup>. Originally, IEC had planned on delivering the presidential, provincial council, and Ghazni's parliamentary elections simultaneously; however, later on, IEC officially announced its inability to hold the mentioned elections altogether, and therefore limited their scope of work to only delivering the Presidential Election by September.28<sup>th</sup>.2019 in all 34 provinces.

One of the issues which TEFA proactively shared its concerns on was voters' turnout, which has reportedly been very weak across the country, mainly on account of weak, unproductive, and poorly planned campaign strategies of the presidential tickets during their campaign period.

Despite the fact that the 2019 Presidential election as a whole was a successful process, still there have been occurrences of operational setbacks in polling centers and stations across the country, among which there are issues which greatly predominate e.g. Voters who were previously registered with a particular polling center were not recognized by the biometric devices, and there have also been cases where voters could not find their names on the printed voters' list. Such setbacks and malpractices have occurred in all 34 provinces, but with different magnitudes.

### **Observation methodology, and Data Analysis**

Transparent Election Foundation of Afghanistan, as an umbrella organization to 47 civil society organizations across the country, has had its professional and non-partisan observation from the beginning of the 2019 electoral process which was Top-up voters' registration, all the way through correction of voter list, candidacy, election campaign, and the very 2019 E-Day. By deploying 5,200 trained, professional, and non-partisan observers across the country, TEFA

managed to observe and report on all three phases of E-Day, namely poll opening, voting and closing and counting in 2,900 polling centers.



TEFA's observers were equipped with an observation cap, observation manual, 4 distinct checklists namely poll opening, voting, closing & counting, and incident reports checklists each containing special question to capture best and all of the E-Day, and were deployed to their designated polling centers and stations. These field observes from all over the country were in contact with TEFA's call center agents via phone and reported on real-time findings, based on which TEFA released two distinguished statements on poll opening and voting phases. The rest of the reports were shared after the closing and counting phase. All the data received from field observers on E-Day were accurately entered into TEFA's database, followed by a diligent scrutiny, analysis and developing a comprehensive synopsis of the results which will be shared via media with EMBs, and election stakeholders especially the electorate. It is also noteworthy that TEFA managed to assemble approximately 75% of the overall result sheets, which have been entered into TEFA's database, indicating the preliminary results of the 2019 election, but TEFA prefers not to share the results, and will wait for IEC.

### **Challenges encountered while observing**

While observing the 2019 electoral process, TEFA came across the following challenges:

1. Lack of international community's financial assistance.
2. Delayed issuance of accreditation to observer foundations
3. Limited time for registering observers with IEC's observers' portal
4. IEC's website crashed several times few days prior to election.
5. TEFA's observers were disallowed to observe in 13% of polling stations in 7 provinces.
6. Restrictions placed by IEC's staff and security forces on capturing pictures and video clips in polling centers in 18 provinces
7. Telecommunication services were lost in some provinces, disconnecting some observers from TEFA's head and provincial offices.
8. Upsurge in security threats in some provinces, in fact, three of TEFA's observers were held hostages by Taliban in Takhar.

9. IEC's freedom from bearing responsibility for challenges on E-Day.
10. TEFA's executives being threatened by members of a certain number of presidential tickets.

### **Challenges of the 2019 electoral process and IEC's early preparations**

E-Day is a clear and fair depiction of EMBs' work more concretely of IEC. TEFA as a domestic oversight body with years of professional observation experience both within the country and abroad, based on its observation from IEC's work proceedings, had incessantly shared its concerns, critics, and recommendations with IEC for the betterment of the process; however, IEC acted negligently of what was shared with it by TEFA, and accentuated that all preparations and procurements are in place. This lack of impulse and negligence caused the following forespoken problems:

1. Absence of international observers, even within EMBs
2. Lack of on time delivery of sensitive and insensitive electoral material to some PCs in some districts.
3. Telecommunication services were lost and no other alternative was devised to establish connection.
4. Violation of election law and code of conduct by all managerial layers of IEC.
5. Inaccurate modification of voter list by IEC.
6. In contrast with the election calendar, voter lists were not disseminated in polling centers prior to E-Day.
7. The target number of human capital was not recruited for PCs, especially for female polling stations.
8. Lack of proper training and development programs for IEC's staff.
9. Absence of a contingency plan for voter list installed in the biometric devices.
10. IEC had less meaningful awareness programs especially for women.
11. Upsurge in security threats.
12. Citizens mistrust in both IEC and the 2019 election, and IEC's inability to restore their confidence and build their trust.

### **Summary of TEFA's observation findings from the 2019 Presidential Election**

TEFA considers the 2019 election an important milestone for consolidating Afghanistan's democracy despite all its challenges and constraints, and declares the 2019 presidential election a successful democratic practice should the process be concluded with justifiable results backed by a clear distinction between the valid and invalid ballots.

Security has been a serious challenges for the 2019 Presidential election; however, despite the upsurge in security threats, Afghanistan's security forces did leave no stone unturned for

ensuring citizens' safety and security to the optimum, which truly is a great achievement for our nation as whole.

Domestic observers have also played a momentous role in the 2019 election, their endeavor for observing the polls and giving wide coverage across the country without international observers is highly commendable, and their reports can be a strong source for shedding light on the end results of the 2019 election and for making a clear distinction between valid and valid ballots. Media on the other hand also made a great deal of contribution to the process by working incessantly to echo the ground realities of E-Day through different platforms and means for spreading awareness among the public.

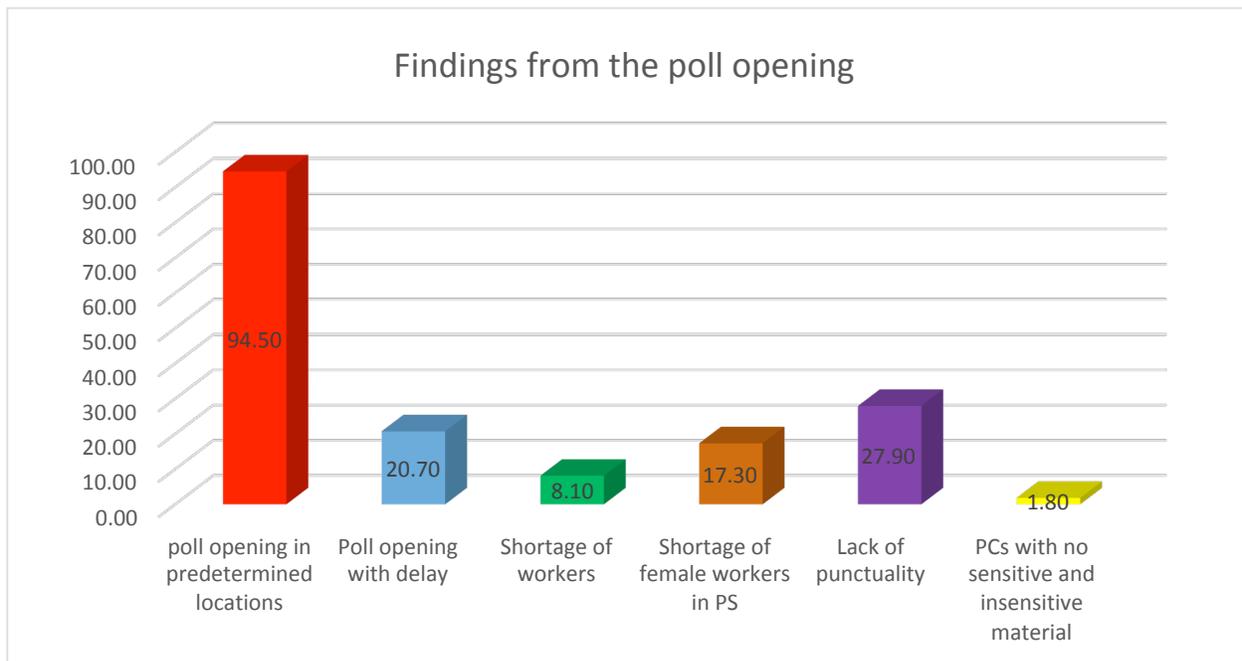
Unfortunately, the process cannot only be defined with all such positivity; there have been weak points in the process among which the following points predominate: Lack of IEC's operational preparation and procurement for E-Day, weak voters' turnout, Biometric devices malfunctioned in some PCs, voters not being recognized by biometric server, discrepancy between digital and printed voter lists, Lack of coordination between IEC and its provincial offices on account of no telecommunication service, some PCs were not supplied with sensitive and insensitive election material, inadequate number of workers in PC especially in female polling stations, relocation of some PCs without coordinating with presidential tickets, Absence of voter list in some PCs, lack of a shared procedure for using biometric devices, IEC's workers were not present on time in some polling centers, a certain number of voters could not cast their ballot due of lack of coordination among IEC, its provincial offices and polling centers across the country, security threats in some districts, a great number of polling centers were opened with delay, and absence of ECC's representative in some polling centers.

TEFA conceives the 2019 Presidential election far better than the 2018 Parliamentary elections in all operational respects, and declares the roles of EMBs especially IEC tremendously productive and constructive.

**TEFA's observation findings present the following:**

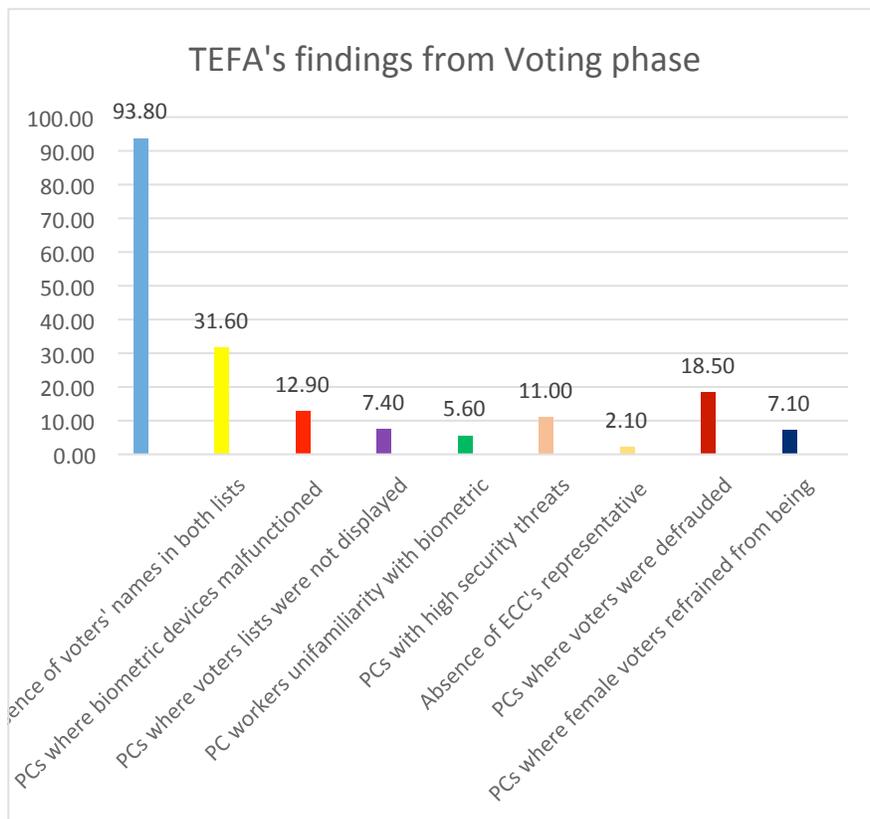
1. Around 94.5% of the polling centers were opened in their predetermined locations, only 5.5% of them were misplaced.
2. According to TEFA's findings, around 721 polling centers in provinces like Paktia, Khost, Urozgan, Ghor, Herat, Badghis, Nooristan, Logar, Nangarhar, Sar-e-Pol, Faryab, Kandahar, Farah, Nimroz, Kunar, Zabul, Kundoz, Takhar, and Badakhshan did not open, because of security threats, Lack of PC staff, absence of sensitive and insensitive material, and relocation of polling centers.
3. 79.3% of the polling centers were opened on time exactly at 07:00am, while the remaining 20.7% of the polling centers opened with hours of delay.

4. Voters' turnout was extremely weak in the 2019 Presidential Election, according to TEFA's findings, around 2 million voters participated in the election, out of which only 21% of them were female voters.
5. Only 8.1% of the polling stations had inadequate workers.
6. 17.3% of female polling stations had inadequate workers which happens to be one of the reasons why female voters had weaker turnout.
7. In 27.9% of the polling stations, workers were not available on time (06:30am) and so started their work with procrastination.
8. 1.8% of the polling centers were not supplied with sensitive and insensitive election material at all, which is why they remained closed all day.



9. In 93.8% of polling stations, voters could not be recognized by the biometric devices.
10. In 31.6% of the polling stations, voters' name could be found neither on the printed list nor on the digital one.
11. In 12.9% of the polling stations, biometric devices malfunctioned.
12. In 14 provinces of Afghanistan some telecommunication services were lost, leaving IEC at bay with weak connection with its provincial offices and more importantly with PCs' workers, leaving the workers uninformed of IEC's solution for the voters' list, because which a certain number of voters could not cast their ballots.

13. Voters' lists were not displayed in 7.4% of the polling centers.
14. 5.6% of the workers were not familiar with the use of biometric devices, and according to what TEFA's findings present, these workers were not properly trained by IEC.
15. 11% of the polling centers were struck by serious security threats, which is why some voters could not cast their votes.
16. In 2.1% of the polling centers, there were no representatives of ECC present.
17. In 18.5% of PCs, voters were convinced and defrauded to vote in favor of a particular candidate.
18. In 7.1% of the female polling stations, female voters did not allow workers to capture their photo, which is why in some cases, PCs' workers were compelled to push the process forward without taking their photo. This is also one of the reasons why female voters refrained from participating in the election.
19. 3.6% of polling centers were located in insecure areas.
20. So far, 538 electoral violations in 24 provinces have been reported to TEFA.



**Recommendations:**

1. IEC should make a clear distinction between voters that are represented by the central biometric server and voters that aren't; disaggregated by men and women.

2. IEC must expedite the process and must quickly transfer results into the main database, because if it continues at its current momentum, the preliminary results will face a serious delay.
3. IEC should remain resilient in all situations, no matter how challenging the process gets, and should refrain from seeking any sort of domestic or international assistances.
4. IEC should openly announce the number of open and closed polling centers with their exact name and location at the best interest of time.
5. IEC should provide clear information on the number of used and unused ballot papers.
6. ECC should classify and address electoral complaints in coordination with observer bodies through meetings.
7. All presidential candidates should avoid announcing premature results that would potentially lead the process to a severe crisis.
8. IEC must announce the preliminary results of the 2019 election in accordance with the election calendar.
9. International organizations should deploy their observers to EMBs on a regular basis and should not rely on a one time observation, because in their absence, the possibilities of electoral fraud will increase dramatically.