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Elections in Iraq

April 30 Council of Representatives Elections

Frequently Asked Questions

Middle East and North Africa

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

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April 11, 2014

Frequently Asked Questions

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Disclosure:

These FAQs reflect decisions made by the Iraqi elections authorities as of April 11, 2014, to the best of our knowledge. This document does not represent any IFES policy or technical recommendations.

Who will be elected on April 30, 2014?

On April 30, 2014, Iraq will hold the Council of Representatives (CoR) election in all of its 18 governorates. All of the seats (328) in the CoR will be up for election. The members of the CoR will elect the Iraqi President within 30 days from the first convening of the CoR.

Out-of-country voting is scheduled to take place from April 29-30 in 19 countries. Special voting will take place on April 28 to accommodate special need voting for Iraqi Security Forces.

Three hundred and twenty-eight parliament seats will be up for election.

What type of electoral system will be used in this election?

An open list system will be used in this election. Under this kind of electoral system, a voter may select both a political entity and a specific candidate within a list, or select a political entity only.

A political entity is defined as one of the following:

- A party registered under the Council of Representatives (CoR) Elections Law No. 45 of 2013, which is presenting a list of candidates for election
- An individual entity, such as an independent candidate
- A combination of the two aforementioned entities, such as a coalition of two or more political parties or individuals presenting a unified list of candidates for election

The system will use the 18 governorates as the constituencies. The counting system has been changed slightly from the largest remainder method to the modified Sainte-Laguë method due to a ruling by the Supreme Court that stated the previous method discriminated against smaller parties.

The use of the Sainte-Laguë method means that seats will be distributed among the candidates on the open list. The seats are first allocated to participating political entities based on the number of valid votes received. The candidates within each open list will then be re-ranked based on the number of votes obtained by each. The candidate who secures the highest number of votes within the open list shall be deemed the winner and so on for the rest of the candidates, assuring a woman candidate after each three winning men, accounting for the 25 percent quota for women candidates.

Will any seats be reserved for women or minority groups?

Seven compensatory seats that were awarded at the national level in the previous Council of Representatives (CoR) elections to parties whose national share of the vote was not reflected in the seats won at the governorate level have been allocated to individual governorates. Eight seats remain reserved for minority groups at the national level including: five seats allocated to Christians in Baghdad,

Ninewa, Kirkuk, Dohuk, Erbil; one seat to Yezidis in Ninewa; one seat to Sabean Mandeans in Baghdad; and one seat for Shabaks in Ninewa.

The total number of candidate women should be no less than 25 percent in the political entities lists. When the list is submitted to the Independent High Electoral Commission for candidates' accreditation, there must be a female candidate after each three male candidates. Similarly, women's representation in the CoR should be 25 percent.

What is the Council of Representatives? What is its mandate?

The Council of Representatives (CoR) is the main elected body of Iraq. It consists of 328 members elected for four years, with two sessions in each annual term.

The CoR passes federal laws, oversees the executive, ratifies treaties and approves nominations of certain officials. Importantly, it also elects the President, who selects a Prime Minister from the majority coalition in the CoR.

The CoR approves the appointment of members to the Federal Court of Cassation, the Chief Public Prosecutor and the President of Judicial Oversight Commission (as proposed by the Higher Judicial Council). It also approves the appointment of the Army Chief of Staff, his assistants and those of the rank of Division Commanders and above, and the Director of the Intelligence Service, as proposed by the Cabinet.

The last elections for the CoR were held in March 2010.

What is the legal framework for this election?

The legislative framework for this year's Council of Representatives (CoR) elections is based on the CoR Elections Law No. 45 of 2013 passed by the CoR and approved by the President on November 25, 2013. The law was published in the official Iraqi gazette on December 2, 2013.

Additionally, the Independent High Electoral Commission issued regulations pertaining to the 2013 electoral process.

Who is eligible to vote?

To qualify to vote, a voter needs to prove that he or she is:

- An Iraqi citizen, at least 18 years of age in the year of the elections
- Legally qualified to register to vote. The legal criterion requires that a person is of sound mind (not ruled by a court as mentally incompetent) and has not been convicted of a crime. A crime is categorized as an action punishable by more than five years of imprisonment.

- Listed in the voter register
- In possession of an electronic card

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) who are qualified to vote are provided the right to vote based on their identified place of origin. Special provisions under Iraq's electoral laws also define an IDP as: "An Iraqi who has been forcefully displaced from his permanent place of residence to another place within Iraq after April 9, 2003, for any reason." Similarly, Iraqi Security Forces are entitled to vote based on their place of origin.

Iraqis living abroad who are qualified to vote will be able to do so in the out-of-country voting process based on their identified place of origin. The Independent High Electoral Commission will open 14 country offices in the following countries: Australia, Canada, Denmark, Egypt, Germany, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Netherlands, Sweden, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, and United States of America. Additionally, five polling centers will be opened in Austria, France, New Zealand, Norway and Spain.¹

Who can be a candidate?

To qualify as a candidate, one must:

- Be an Iraqi citizen, at least 30 years of age
- Have an education level of at least secondary school
- Be of good moral reputation, and not convicted of a crime of moral turpitude.

A candidate cannot be an active serving member of the security forces or subject to the de-Ba'athification law² or have illegally enriched him or herself at the expense of public funds.

The Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) submits the list of candidates presented by the political entities to the Justice and Accountability Commission (JAC) to determine eligibility within 10 days from submission. Once potential candidates are vetted through the JAC, they are put forth for approval by the IHEC. Approved candidates are then eligible for nomination. The number of candidates on a list is limited to double the number of seats allocated for the constituency. Political party lists must have at least three candidates.

How is the election management body structured?

The Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) is responsible for conducting all elections and

¹ The polling centers are managed by the country offices to which they are assigned.

² De-Ba'athification refers to a Coalition Provincial policy outlined in the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) Order 1, which entered into force on May 16, 2003. The policy's goal was to remove the Ba'ath Party influence in Iraq. To accomplish its goal, the policy declared that all public sector employees affiliated with the Ba'ath Party were to be removed from their positions and to be banned from any future employment in the public sector.

referendums in Iraq and implements these in accordance with policies and procedures defined by the IHEC Board of Commissioners.

Established by the Council of Representatives (CoR) in May 2007, the IHEC is an independent electoral authority consisting of nine members appointed by and under the supervision of the CoR. The IHEC is comprised of eight permanent Commissioners and one Chief Electoral Officer (CEO). The CEO heads the IHEC administration and is a non-voting member of the IHEC Board of Commissioners.

The IHEC has 19 Governorate Electoral Offices (GEOs) – one in each governorate except Baghdad, which has two, a regional office in Kurdistan and a headquarters office in Baghdad.

What are the primary duties of the Independent High Electoral Commission?

The main functions of the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) are detailed in Article 4 of IHEC Law No. 11 of 2007:

- Establish and update the voter registry
- Regulate registration and certification of parties for the purpose of contesting elections
- Regulate and certify candidate lists for elections
- Accredite elections observers, party and media agents
- Adjudicate all electoral complaints and appeals (themselves appealable only before a special judicial electoral panel)
- Certify tally procedures
- Declare and certify elections and referenda results (except Council of Representatives results)
- Set regulations and instructions preserving a fair electoral process
- Certify the structure and senior appointments of the electoral administration
- Set financial policy for the IHEC

How was voter registration conducted? How were polling stations allocated to voters?

The voter registration update (VRU) ahead of the Council of Representatives (CoR) elections took place from November 10-December 9, 2013, and was accessible to voters across 1,096 voter registration centers.

Voters were not permitted to register in more than one district³ and the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) is required to publicly display the voter list for each district in alphabetical order. If a voter finds that his or her name was not listed or was erroneous, he or she must register a written

³ Each identified area for which a number of seats have been allotted in accordance with the provisions of the Council of Representatives Elections Law No. 45 of 2013.

objection with the IHEC National Office or with the governorate's electoral office. The IHEC is obligated to correct the error within a specified period of time prior to an electoral event.

The voter registration update was closed on December 9, 2013. At the end of the period, over 1,205,000 registration forms were issued, with approximately 26,764 for internally displaced persons. Voter lists were posted for public scrutiny during an exhibition and challenges period from December 3-9, 2013.

The distribution of voters was based on the existing IHEC registration database and on the food agent database obtained from the Ministry of Trade.⁴ Polling centers will be established in schools and each center will have a predetermined number of polling stations, with a maximum of 450 voters allocated to each station.

Who registered as a candidate?

The registration period for political entities concluded on November 14, 2013. A total of 277 political entities were ratified.

The registration period for coalitions concluded on December 10, 2013. The IHEC regulations state that coalition lists should contain at least three candidates and no more than twice the total of the number of allocated seats in a single district, unless the coalition is comprised of only one person. At least 25 percent of candidates must be women. A total of 36 coalitions were registered.

The registration period for candidates concluded on January 9, 2014. Due to the security situation, the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) extended the submission of the candidate lists for the Anbar governorate until January 15. A total of 9,453 candidates were submitted by political entities. Out of these, approximately 2,400 candidates were women. All candidate names were submitted to the Justice and Accountability Commission on January 20, 2014.

After the ballot position lottery on January 29, 2014, the IHEC announced that 107 political entities will contest the elections.

In March, the IHEC announced that a total of 9,040 candidates with 2,612 women candidates were approved to run in the elections.

The largest parties on the approved list include the Prime Minister's State of Law Coalition, the Sadrist Movement (Ahrar), the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Iraqi National Accord. Significant new parties include the former militant group Asa'ib Ahl al-Hag and the White Iraqiya Bloc, which split from the Iraqi National Accord.

⁴ In the absence of population census data, the Ministry of Trade's data for the food ration card system (whereby Iraqis are provided food rations) was used.

What are the rules on campaigning?

Fundamental principles of the electoral campaign are equality between all candidates, neutrality of the electoral administration and transparency of the campaign. Campaigning and campaign paraphernalia cannot be displayed in government buildings or polling locations.

The the electoral campaign period started on April 01, 2014 at 12:00 a.m., and concludes at 7:00 a.m. on April 29, 2014 – 24 hours before Election Day.

What are the rules for campaign finance?

The Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) has defined expenditure limits for the political entities and candidates. The ceilings for election campaign spending vary. The ceiling for a candidate is capped at 250,000 Iraqi dinars (approximately USD 210) multiplied by the number of voters in the constituency. The ceiling for a political entity is capped at 250,000 Iraqi dinars (approximately USD 210) multiplied by the number of candidates of the political entity list in the constituency. Lastly, the ceiling for a closed list is capped at 250,000 (approximately USD 210) Iraqi dinars multiplied by the number of voters in the constituency and then multiplied by the number of candidates in the closed list of the entity.

Foreign contributions are prohibited.

Electoral expenditures are allowed only for the following categories of expenses:

- Renting electoral offices and the expenses associated with their maintenance
- Amounts paid to employees who work in the electoral campaign
- Expenses for printing, publishing, distributing and posting of billboards and pictures
- Developing and printing manuals, pamphlets, brochures and other printed electoral campaign materials, as well as disseminating the messages via the internet and mobile phones
- Amounts paid for organizing meeting, seminars, conferences and festivals as well as other related electoral activities
- Amounts paid to transport voters and employees who work in the electoral campaign
- Amounts paid for the printed, audio and video ads

Political entities and candidates are required to submit preliminary financial reports specifying their campaign income and expenditure no later than seven days after Election Day. The final reports should be submitted to the IHEC within 30 days of announcement of the results.

Non-compliance with campaign finance rules will result in fines and potential law suits if an electoral crime was also committed.

What rules should media follow during the electoral campaign?

Media in Iraq is regulated by the Communication and Media Commission (CMC). The Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC), in consultation with the CMC, produced regulations governing the media during the election period. These regulations stipulate the roles the CMC, the IHEC and the judiciary play in controlling the media.

According to the Code for Media during Elections issued by the CMC, the Iraqi Media Network as a publicly funded media broadcaster with a legal obligation to educate and inform Iraqis, shall provide free air time for political debates and political discussions allowing each candidate to appear at least once during elections programs.

The media campaign period for all political entities, coalitions and candidates ends 24 hours before Election Day. The IHEC issues accreditation and provides the media with access to IHEC selected facilities to observe the voting. The IHEC also issues the Media Code of Conduct, which regulates media responsibilities during the elections. According to these regulations, the media must not interfere with IHEC staff in the conduct of the electoral process; must respect the secrecy of the ballot; and must not interfere with the movement of voters inside polling centers.

The regulations also prohibit posting campaign material at certain venues, such as religious sites and government offices. It also prohibits certain content, such as government logos and images of religious figures who are not running as candidates. The IHEC may withdraw media accreditation from media entities that violate these regulations. Violations may be referred to the CMC for action.

Where can one find information about the elections?

The Independent High Electoral Commission's (IHEC) public outreach and voter education campaigns are conducted in up to four languages (Arabic, Assyrian, Kurdish and Turkoman). The campaigns use TV and radio, newspapers, large scale material and direct outreach to voters through symposiums, public meetings, call centers and websites to reach the target population.

Information about the election process can be found on IHEC's website at www.ihec.iq and in English at www.ihec.iq/en. The website contains information on elections and the electoral process in Arabic, English and Kurdish. Regulations, procedures, press releases and outreach products are uploaded on a daily basis.

The IHEC has a Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/ihec2013>), Twitter and Flickr accounts in Arabic. The IHEC also uses "pay per click" ads on Facebook to drive traffic to its page which will provide updates using news on the website. The IHEC has additionally created an application for smart phones that has news from the website. Eventually, users will be able to upload details of their polling center and station.

The IHEC set up a call center to provide information on the electoral process (with Arabic, Kurdish and Turkoman-speaking staff), which can be accessed using the short code 5777.

What are the new technology improvements in the electoral system?

The Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) has started the process of introducing technology to the electoral process. In September 2013, the IHEC Board of Commissioners took a formal decision to implement an automated voter registration (AVR) system to prevent fraud and improve accuracy of the voter list. The Commission has allocated more than 260 million US dollars to support the AVR.

The acquisition of an AVR system at the end of 2013 and the announcement of the intention to implement electronic voting by the 2018 Council of Representatives elections are significant steps towards automation of the Iraqi elections.

What is the automated voter registration (AVR) system?

Automated voter registration (AVR) is the process of registering voters using biometric information and subsequent use of this data for removal of duplications from the voter list and voter identification. In the long-term, as biometric registration proceeds, the need for paper-based identification decreases.

Due to the lack of available time, it is not feasible to register 21.5 million voters using AVR prior to the April 30, 2014 Council of Representatives (CoR) elections. Therefore, the process will be executed in two stages. The first stage of the implementation, which started in January 2014, includes implementation of the system; manufacture and distribution of electronic cards; and use of electronic cards in the CoR elections in conjunction with existing paper-based identification systems. The first stage will culminate in the CoR elections. This stage also included biometric registration of the civil servants and the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) employees from January to February 20. Only registered IHEC employees will be allowed to work during Election Day, even if they are temporary employees.

Figure 1 Biometric Registration Kit



The second stage, which is the continued electronic registration of voters and extended public outreach campaign, will start in June 2014 and will continue for approximately four years until all Iraqi voters are registered using this method. The IHEC's objective is to have this completed by the 2018 CoR elections.

The AVR process consists of several steps. First is the collection of data from the population and its codification. This process will take place using biometric registration kits. The kits consist of a laptop computer, a printer, a card reader, a camera, a fingerprint reader, and associated power systems. The

IHEC has purchased 10,000 registration kits, which were deployed to the governorate electoral offices and distributed to 1,100 voter registration centers.

The next step is transfer of the data and de-duplication of the data at the IHEC. The final stage is creation of the extracts for the polling station verification devices. In parallel with this process, the data necessary for electronic cards processing is extracted and data necessary for loading of the voter registration kits is obtained.

What is the electronic card?

The Independent High Electoral Commission decided that all voters would be issued with electronic cards. These cards do not contain biometric information such as fingerprints or facial information. Only the data from the existing voter registration database is used in the production of the card. This card is used to locate the voter record in the polling station verification device (*see Figure 3*). Electronic cards do not carry biometric information. As biometric information is collected, it will also be stored on the verification devices. Voter identity will be directly verified by processing voter biometrics against stored information in the polling kit devices. Where the device does not have biometric information, traditional identification methods may be used. However, the possession of the new electronic card is a condition for this validation to take place.

Figure 2 Electronic Card



Only voters who have an electronic card will be able to vote during the 2014 Council of Representatives elections. If a voter loses his/her card, s/he would not be allowed to vote. However, if the card is partially destroyed, s/he will be still allowed to cast a ballot. The Iraqi diaspora participating in out-of-country voting would not need the electronic cards. There will be two types of cards: white for regular voters and maroon marked with an “S” for the members of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) participating in the Special Need Voting (SNV). In addition, white cards issued to internally displaced persons (IDPs) will be marked with the letter “M.”

The electronic cards will be active only for Election Day from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and will be deactivated for 30 days after being used to vote. They cannot be used to vote twice. Previously, if voters had been in line by the close of voting, they would be allowed to vote. This is no longer the case as the verification will only be programmed to work between 7:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. People will not be able to vote even if they are in line on time, which is why voting hours were extended from 10 to 11 hours.

What are the basic rules for Election Day?

The elections will take place on Wednesday, April 30, 2013. Polling stations will be open from 7:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. for regular and absentee voting.

Voters are assigned to polling centers on the basis of updated voter data during the voter registration period. Each polling station will have a polling station verification device and a copy of its voter list to confirm the voter's identity. Voter names will be listed in alphabetical order and each voter who wishes to vote will sign the voter list prior to casting a ballot.

The ballot should be cast in person and proxy voting is prohibited. Indelible ink will be used as a safeguard against possible multiple voting.

What are the types of polling centers and stations?

Polling centers serve a coordination role, with polling stations located within the center. The Independent High Electoral Commission will serve 21 million voters through 8,642 polling centers and 51,403 polling stations, including 48,765 regular polling stations, 81 conditional voting polling stations and 2,557 Special Need Voting polling stations.

Regular Polling Centers

Voting in regular centers will take place in accordance with the final voter list. There are 21,503,891 voters on the final voter list. Voter list posters will be displayed at polling centers one week prior to Election Day.

Polling Stations for Special Need Voting (SNV)

Using information submitted by the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Interior, the Independent High Electoral Commission created a special voter list. The list contains approximately 1,023,829 voters working for the armed forces and the police who will get an opportunity to vote on April 28, 2014. Names of these voters have been removed from the final voter list. There will be 532 polling centers and 2,557 polling stations established for SNV.

Conditional Voting

Conditional voting allows voters not included on a voter list to cast a ballot and to have their ballot conditionally accepted while the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) verifies their eligibility. The IHEC Board of Commissioners limited conditional voting to hospitals and prisons only. These voters will be provided a ballot and two envelopes. After making his or her selection on the ballot, the voter will insert the ballot in the envelope, seal it and complete the information on the front of the envelope including name, voter ID, date of birth, voter registration center name, family number from the food ration card and previous voting center name, if any.

In March, the IHEC issued a decision to allow internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Anbar and voters who were not able to collect an electronic card to vote conditionally due to the security situation in this governorate. The strict document requirements including a photo ID and the food ration card issued in 2013 and 2014 were introduced for this conditional voting category.

The IHEC will process ballots at each governorate count center to verify the voter's eligibility from the registration database. If the voter is eligible, the outside envelope is opened and the ballot is removed and mixed and counted among other ballots. Otherwise, the ballot is considered invalid.

The IHEC also approved the plan to activate mobile polling stations to accommodate hospital patients and detainees in several prisons.

How many poll workers are in a polling center and polling station, and what are their duties?

A polling center will have six polling center staff:

- Polling center coordinator
- Two queue controllers (one male, one female)
- Two inspectors (one male, one female)
- One technical supervisor

Each polling station is composed of five members:

- Polling station manager – responsible for conduct of the polling operations; supervises polling staff and all activities in the polling station to ensure procedures are followed correctly
- Queue controller – prevents polling station from becoming overcrowded; checks voters' fingers for ink and ensures voters are prepared for voting and have electronic cards and a photo identification document

Figure 3 Verification Device



- Identification officer – verifies the identity of voters by checking the electronic cards and a photo identification document; takes electronic cards from the voters and puts them in the verification device to verify their data; and asks voters to put their left thumbs in the dedicated part of the verification device for scanning of the fingerprints. The identification officer also scans the ballot barcode using the verification device and hands the electronic cards to voters – concluding the verification process.
- Ballot issuer – looks for the voter’s name in the paper voter list; explains method of voting; stamps the back of each ballot; folds the ballot to make it easier for the voter to fold after marking the ballot so stamp is visible. When the verification device finishes reading the electronic card and the ballot barcode, the ballot issuer asks voters to sign or put the fingerprints of their left thumbs (for illiterate voters) next to their names on the paper voter list and issues a ballot to each voter.
- Ballot box monitor – monitors the ballot box at all times and ensures the right-hand index finger of the voter is inked with indelible ink; each ballot is stamped with the official Independent High Electoral Commission ballot stamps; and each voter places her or his ballot in the ballot box.

When will polling stations be set up?

Poll workers will meet on April 29, 2014, with their polling center coordinator and station manager to set up the polling center and station. They will perform an inventory of polling material and display voter lists and other posters.

The polling center coordinator and station manager will also assign tasks and organize the layout of the station for Election Day at this time.

What are the poll workers’ first duties on Election Day?

Poll workers should arrive at their polling station by 6:00 a.m. on April 30, 2013. At least three staff members must be present to open the polling station. They will check sensitive electoral material stored in the ballot box to ensure all materials have arrived. They will take an oath to perform their duties with honesty, impartiality, integrity, independence and dedication, and will sign an employment contract and the code of conduct.

Poll workers should vote before 7:00 a.m. without using an electronic card. They will vote at a special polling station which will be numbered zero and which will be established in each polling center with a dedicated ballot box. A blank voters’ list will be filled out manually with the poll workers data including: name, date of birth, family number and electronic card number. The polling center coordinator will take the electronic cards from the staff members who casted a ballot (i.e., these staff members will be in possession of electronic cards but they will not use them).

The station manager will empty the box; show it to all present; and put a tight seal on each side of the ballot box, leaving the top slot open for voters to cast their ballots. The identification officer will switch on the verification device using the access card of the device.

Polls should open for voting at exactly 7:00 a.m.

What are the steps for voting?

There are four steps for voting.

Step 1: Queuing in front of the polling station:

- The queue controller allows voters to enter the polling station starting at 7:00 a.m.
- The queue controller checks voters' hands to ensure there is no indelible ink on their fingers, particularly on the cuticles, which would indicate the individual has already voted. If there is ink on the voter's fingers, the voter will not be permitted to enter the polling station. The queue controller also checks if the voter has his/her electronic card and a photo identification document.
- The queue controller refers voters to posters at the entrance of the polling station to ensure voters are aware of the name and number of the political entity and candidate of their choice.

Step 2: Identifying voters, scanning electronic card, finding names on the voter list, scanning thumb, and signing the register:

- The voter shows his/her electronic card and photo identification document (civil identification card, Iraqi nationality card, Iraqi passport, retirement card, driving license, international passport or international ID card) to the identification officer.
- The identification officer checks if the photograph on the identification document matches the person present at the polling station and inserts the electronic card in the verification device to verify his/her data.
- The identification officer asks the voter to put his/her left thumb in the verification device part dedicated to scanning fingerprints. If the device is not able to scan the left thumb fingerprint or if the finger is amputated, the fingerprint of the following finger shall be scanned until having the possibility to read the fingerprint of one of the left hand fingers. If the left hand is amputated, this process shall be repeated with the right hand fingers. If both voter's hands are amputated, voter shall be authorized to cast a vote without a fingerprint.
- The device saves the fingerprint and the time at which a voter casts a ballot in the card and in the device.
- The identification officer hands over the voter's identification document to the ballot issuer to find his/her name on the voters list and scan the ballot barcode using the verification device.
- The identification officer returns the electronic card to the voter and passes the ballot to the ballot issuer.

In case the verification device is not able to read the voter's data stored on the electronic card, but the voter is found on the voter list, s/he will be allowed to vote. The electronic card will be taken from the voter and the case will be marked on the voter list.

Step 3: Distribution of the ballot paper to the voter:

- The ballot issuer searches the voter list in alphabetical order to locate the voter's name.
- The ballot issuer folds the ballot and stamps it with the ink stamp so it is visible on the folded ballot. This will help the voter fold it in the same manner so the ballot box monitor can easily see the stamps before the voter casts the ballot. This ensures all legitimately-cast ballots are stamped; unstamped ballots will not be included in the results.
- The ballot issuer hands over the ballot to the identification officer to scan the barcode with the card reader device before giving it to the voter.
- The ballot issuer asks the voter to sign or provide a thumbprint with the thumb of the left hand (for illiterate voters) next to his/her name on the voter list. Any person who refuses to sign or thumbprint the voter list will not be permitted to vote.
- The ballot issuer explains to the voter how to mark the ballot; s/he must ensure the explanation on how to mark the ballot is impartial. The ballot issuer must not point to the ballot, as it may appear that s/he is telling the voter for whom to vote.
- The ballot issuer tells the voter to go behind one of the empty voting screens and mark the ballot in secret. The ballot must be folded so no one can see the voter's choice.
- If the voter makes a mistake on the ballot, s/he may return the ballot to the ballot issuer to receive a new one. Without looking at the front of the ballot, the ballot issuer writes the word "Spoiled" across the back of the ballot and puts it in an envelope labeled "Spoiled and Discarded Ballots." A new ballot is then issued to the voter.

Step 4: Casting a ballot:

- The ballot box monitor admits one voter at a time into the ballot box area.
- The ballot box monitor must ensure the voter dips his/her right-hand index finger into the indelible ink so the ink covers the cuticle of the voter's fingernail before the voter is allowed to cast a ballot into the ballot box.
- The ballot box monitor must ensure the voter does not try to wipe his/her finger before the ink dries. Any voter refusing to ink his/her finger will not be permitted to cast a ballot. In this case, the ballot will be discarded.
- If a voter has missing fingers, the ballot box monitor dips one of his/her other fingers of the right hand, and, if s/he has no right hand, the voter will dip one of the fingers from his/her left hand. If the voter has no fingers, it is not necessary to apply ink.
- The ballot box monitor ensures the ballot is stamped and the voter places the folded ballot in the ballot box, and then instructs the voter to leave the polling station.

What will the ballot paper look like?

A total of 21.5 million ballot papers were printed. The ballot paper (Figure 4) lists all competing political entities with their registration number, name and logo. A blank box is located next to each political entity to allow the voter to mark his or her preference. If the voter wishes to vote for a specific candidate, s/he should mark the box next to the candidate number in the candidates' area on the left hand side of the ballot, in addition to the mark for the political entity.

The ballot also contains instructions on how to make selections in Arabic and Kurdish; a watermark; and barcode to be scanned by the verification device to prevent tampering.

Who can be assisted to cast their votes?

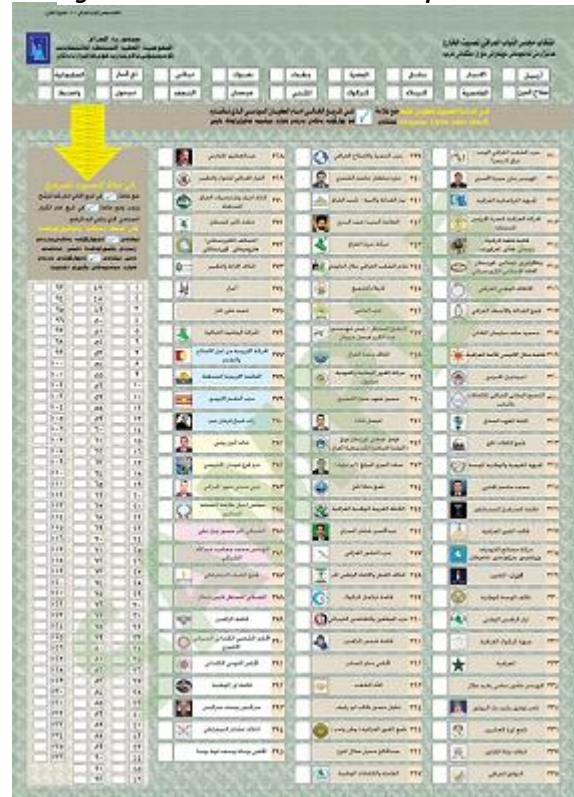
A voter who requires assistance in voting – including those who are blind, illiterate, or cannot write due to a physical disability – may ask the polling station manager for assistance. The polling station manager must not communicate the voter's choice to anyone. A relative to the fourth degree may also assist the voter, but no person may assist more than two voters. The polling station manager must explain to the relative the need to maintain secrecy of the voter's choice. Agents and electoral observers may not assist a voter and may not observe assisted voting.

What efforts are being made to accommodate voters with physical or sensory impairments?

For the forthcoming Council of Representatives elections, the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) has been proactive in identifying and responding to the needs of people with physical or sensory impairments. The IHEC Call Center staff has been trained to respond to persons with disabilities and provide information on the support that IHEC polling center staff will provide to them.

Public outreach materials are also being produced using less text, bigger fonts, and more images to help people with visual impairments. The IHEC is working with the Ministry of Transport to provide vehicles to take people with mobility problems to polling centers.

Figure 4 The 2014 CoR Ballot Sample



When will counting of votes take place?

The counting of votes will take place in polling stations immediately after the polling stations close. This is in contrast to previous Council of Representatives elections when ballots were transported to the Independent High Electoral Commission National Office in Baghdad for counting. However, the counting process for absentee voting and special need voting will take place in each governorate's count center on May 1, 2014.

Counting should be completed without breaks or interruptions.

Who will count the votes?

Poll workers assigned to the polling station are responsible for counting votes immediately after the polls close. Specific results and reconciliation forms have been designed and will be used by poll workers to report the results from their polling station. Ballots will be counted in sets of 25 ballots each. The ballots will be sorted as valid, not stamped, invalid, and empty (ballots with no marked voter's choice). The valid ballots will be counted first to tabulate the political entities votes and later - each individual candidate within the political entities.

All national and international observers, media and political entity agents will be allowed to observe counting at polling stations, count centers, and intake-audit centers. Observers and poll workers are not authorized to leave the premises during counting.

Will elections results be publicly displayed? When will elections results be announced?

Four copies of the results form are prepared by polling station staff. This form includes the number of votes received by all political entities and candidates. One form will be posted on the wall of the polling station so observers and agents can view and record the information. The report printed by the verification device will be posted as well.

Preliminary polling results will be announced on May 15, 2014. The certified results will be announced after complaints are adjudicated by the Electoral Judicial Panel, which has the sole jurisdiction to adjudicate appeals on Board of Commissioners' final decisions.

Who will observe the Council of Representatives elections?

Electoral observers, political entity agents and media have an important role in ensuring the elections are free and fair.

Elections observers are representatives of domestic and international organizations with missions registered and accredited by the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) to observe voter

registration, voting and counting processes. The role of elections observers is to watch the electoral processes and report on whether or not they were conducted in accordance with the law and adhered to international standards.

Only elections observers accredited in accordance with the rules and procedures set forth by the IHEC will be allowed to access and observe electoral processes. The IHEC registers only organizations or networks of organizations, not individual observers. Domestic and international organizations will nominate individuals to enable the organization to perform their role effectively. Observers cannot file an official complaint, but may submit concerns via public reports for the organization they represent.

Political entity and candidate agents may be present at the polling station during polling and counting. Political entity agents have the right to object to decisions of the polling station manager. However, the polling station manager is not obliged to act on each objection. Political entity agents have the right to submit a complaint to the IHEC by completing Complaint Form 110, which is available from the polling center coordinator.

Accredited media are free to cover polling, counting and sorting processes inside polling centers and polling stations. However, media representatives are prohibited from disrupting or influencing the polling process, which means interviews are not allowed inside polling stations and filming is prohibited except in polling centers identified by the IHEC.

Media representatives are not allowed to carry electronic equipment, including cameras and recording devices, except in polling centers identified by the IHEC.

What are electoral offenses?

Forging voter lists, knowingly submitting false registration information, undermining the secrecy of balloting, voting more than once, and altering the vote of another person are all electoral crimes punishable by a monetary fine and six months in prison. More severe crimes are punishable by year-long prison terms, including insulting, defaming, or assaulting a member of the Independent High Electoral Commission or nominating oneself in more than one constituency.

What is the role of Iraq's judiciary in the electoral process? How will disputes be adjudicated?

Iraq has used a unified model of electoral complaint adjudication with complaints first being presented to the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC). The IHEC Board of Commissioners (BoC) has exclusive jurisdiction to resolve disputes arising out of the preparation for and execution of national, regional and governorate elections, and may delegate jurisdiction to resolve disputes in the first instance to the electoral administration. The IHEC has adopted procedures related to electoral complaints. These procedures ensure all complaints are reviewed as quickly as possible, the most important complaints are considered first and complainants find out what decision has been made.

All BoC decisions should be published in three daily newspapers, in both Arabic and Kurdish languages, for a minimum of three days. Any appeals should be submitted within three working days starting from the second day of the publication of the final decision.

Complaints may be submitted by the political entities and voters at any stage of the process to the IHEC, which will investigate and issue a decision in response. Complaints can be submitted to the IHEC National Office (NO) and to governorate electoral offices. On polling and counting complaints, voters and political entity agents will be allowed to submit complaints to the Polling Station Manager using Complaint Form 110. Complaint Form 110 will be available on Election Day at polling centers, governorate electoral offices, governorate counting centers, and the IHEC NO. After Election Day, Complaint Form 110 will be available at the same places, except for polling centers and Governorate Electoral Offices counting centers. A complaint must be submitted within 48 hours of the start time of polling.

The Court of Cassation nominates the Electoral Judicial Panel with the sole jurisdiction to adjudicate appeals on BoC final decisions. The panel should decide within 10 days, starting from the day that the appeal was referred to them by the BoC. All decisions of the Electoral Judicial Panel are final. After all appeals have been decided by the Electoral Judicial Panel, the BoC will certify the elections results.

Resources

- The 2005 Constitution of Iraq ([English](#))
- The IHEC Law No. 11 of 2007 ([English](#))
- The Council of Representatives Elections Law No. 45 of 2013
- The Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) Order no.97 Political Parties and Entities Law of 2004

The IHEC Regulations can be found at: <http://ihec.iq/en>

- The IHEC Regulation No. 1 of 2013 Electoral Campaign Expenditures for the 2014 CoR elections
- The IHEC Regulation No. 2 of 2013 Exhibition and Challenge, and Voter List Update for the 2014 CoR elections
- The IHEC Regulations No. 3 of 2013 Accreditation of the Political Entities and Coalitions for the 2014 CoR elections
- The IHEC Regulation No. 4 of 2013 Local Observers for the 2014 CoR elections
- The IHEC Regulations No. 5 of 2013 Political Entities Agents for the 2014 CoR elections
- The IHEC Regulation No. 6 of 2013 Complaints and Appeals for the 2014 CoR elections
- The IHEC Regulation No. 7 of 2013 Electoral Campaign for the 2014 CoR elections
- The IHEC Regulation No. 8 of 2013 Media Regulations for the 2014 CoR elections
- The IHEC Regulation No. 9 of 2013 International Observers for the 2014 CoR elections
- The IHEC Regulation No. 10 of 2013 Out of Country Voting for the 2014 CoR elections
- The IHEC Regulation No. 11 of 2013 Ratification of the Lists of Candidates for Council for the 2014 CoR elections
- The IHEC Regulation No. 12 of 2013 Biometric Registration of Voters for the 2014 CoR elections
- The IHEC Regulation No. 13 of 2013 Voting, Counting, and Sorting for the 2014 CoR elections