



**A WELL ADMINISTERED AND INCLUSIVE ELECTION OVERALL
A LEGAL FRAMEWORK WITH ROOM FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENT**

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

INTRODUCTION

Amman, 22 September 2016. Following an invitation by the authorities of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to observe the parliamentary election of 20 September, the European Union (EU) deployed an Election Observation Mission (EOM) led by Chief Observer Jo Leinen, Member of the European Parliament (MEP) from Germany. A Delegation of the European Parliament headed by Mariya Gabriel, MEP from Bulgaria, joined the EU EOM to observe election day procedures and subscribes to this Preliminary Statement.

This Preliminary Statement is issued prior to the completion of the tabulation of results, the allocation of seats by the Special Committees (SC), consideration of possible post-election electoral disputes and announcement of the final results. The EU EOM will publish a final report after the conclusion of the electoral process. The final report will include recommendations for possible improvement of future elections, offered for consideration to the Jordanian authorities and other stakeholders.

The EU EOM extends its appreciation to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and to the Independent Election Commission (IEC) of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for their cooperation. The EU EOM is grateful to the EU Delegation to Jordan and to the diplomatic missions of the EU Member States, Canada, Norway and Switzerland resident in Amman for their support.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 20 September, the people of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan elected their 18th Parliament. This election was broadly viewed as a component of an ongoing political reform, a noteworthy example in a region marred by violent conflicts. The reform process is supported by the EU and other key international stakeholders.

The IEC delivered a well-administered and inclusive election. Notwithstanding the lack of access to observers and candidates to intermediate stages of the tabulation process, the election was conducted in an overall transparent manner. Room for additional improvement of the legal framework remains. In particular, respect for key principles, such as the universality and equality of the vote, and the right to stand as candidate could be further enhanced.

The legal framework includes new legislation, such as the 2016 Law on the Election of the Chamber of Deputies (Law on Parliamentary elections, LPE), Law on Political Parties and the Executive Instructions of the IEC, among others. Jordan has acceded to key international and regional treaties, such as the United Nation's (UN) International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Arab Charter on Human Rights (AChHR), which are incorporated in national law. New legislation implemented, fully or in part, a number of the 2013 EU EOM recommendations.

In total, 130 parliamentary seats will be allocated under a new election system based on proportional representation through district candidate lists in 23 electoral districts. The system allows for



multiple voters' preferences and provides for reserved seats for women and minority candidates. Under the current districting, large urban areas are underrepresented and sparsely populated or rural ones are considerably overrepresented. This districting falls short of ensuring the equality of the vote, although it marks a measure of improvement compared to the 2013 districting for the then parliamentary elections.

Out of 50 registered political parties, 39 contested the election with candidates and the remaining 11 supporting the process. In the governorates, the selection of list candidates was often based on tribal consultations. Key political actors, comprising some 80 per cent of candidates running, were mostly local tribespersons and business people, former members of Parliament, and persons of Palestinian origin, rather than the political parties. The Islamic Action Front (IAF), which did not participate in the two previous elections, this time profiled as a front runner political party.

The election was contested by 226 candidate lists with a total of 1,252 candidates. Individual candidates were not allowed to run as such. The number of non-party affiliated candidates exceeded approximately four times the number of party candidates challenging the objective of a party based parliament. There were 252 registered women candidates, an increase of some 25 per cent compared to the 2013 election. A total of 170 former Members of the Jordanian Parliament were running mostly as non-party candidates.

While certain requirements for candidacy are unnecessarily restrictive, the registration of candidatures by the IEC was accomplished in an inclusive and efficient manner respecting legal deadlines. The legal framework affords to voters and candidates possibilities to appeal to the IEC and to the Courts against inaccurate registrations or rejections. While the Courts discharged the candidate appeals in an impartial and timely manner, the absence of a second recourse of appeal left some uncertainty as regards to particular aspects of the rules for candidacy.

The five member IEC exercised guidance and oversight over 23 District Election Committees (DEC) and 4,884 Polling and Counting Committees (PCC). The latter administered the election day process in their respective polling stations (PS) located in 1,483 polling centers (PC). The Commission established four SC, each responsible for a designated area of Jordan, to carry out auditing of preliminary results. Overall, the IEC and its subordinate committees administered the election respecting legal deadlines throughout the period observed by the EU EOM.

The IEC and the Ministry of Interior's (MoI) Department on Civil Status and Passports (DCSP) delivered on their joint responsibilities with regard to voter registration within legal deadlines. The EU EOM was not informed of issues related to the voter lists. On 15 August, the IEC published the final lists with 4,139,732 registered voters including 53.1 per cent women and 46.9 per cent men. The former 'active' system for voter registration was changed to a 'passive' one resulting in some 80 per cent increase in the number of registered voters.

Campaigning started simultaneously with the submission for registration of candidate lists. Overall, the campaign was peaceful, with isolated reports of minor campaign related incidents. Unlike rallies, 'campaign tents', where candidates invite voters for traditional social gatherings, were widely used, although most lists did not present concrete programmes. The IEC recorded 191 violations with regard to campaign activities, mostly related to use of public facilities and wrongfully placed campaign materials, which were removed.



A recent by-law introduced new criteria of funding of political party campaigns including positive incentives for winning seats, and enhanced female and regional membership. Candidates without declared party affiliation are entirely self funding, subject to predefined spending limits. As candidates' audit reports are only to be submitted after the election to the IEC upon request, there is a potential for leniency in the ultimate enforcement of the regulations in the post-election period.

Although no specific restrictions on electoral media coverage were observed, Jordanian media operated in an environment considered as partially free. The current media legal framework, restrictive and at times vague, results in self-censorship. During the observation period three orders banning media reports on specific topics were publicly issued, limiting freedoms of expression guaranteed under international and national laws.

Media made good efforts to inform voters about the new electoral system and encourage voters' participation. However, the decision by the state owned radio and television, and some private media of not covering any campaign activity by candidates in order to keep neutrality deprived voters of receiving information about contestants. EU EOM media monitoring findings showed unbalances in the electoral coverage by Al Rai and Assabeel newspapers, and Josat TV.

Notwithstanding the increase of women candidates, the absence of a constitutional guarantee against discrimination of women continues to underpin their historically low political representation. Significant attention was paid by the media about the importance of women participation and the interpretation of the legal provisions about women quota. There were also initiatives aimed at enhancing participation of disabled persons.

In an inclusive and timely manner, the IEC accredited 17 civil society organisations (CSO) with 13,398 national observers and 33 organisations with 488 international observers. CSO observers are still obliged to report possible irregularities first to the IEC and only after that – to make them public. There is no legal provision regulating parallel vote tabulation (PVT) by CSOs and access of the public to their findings. Restricting CSOs' freedom of expression and imparting of information is not in line with Jordan's international legal obligations. The EU EOM was informed by both the IEC and civil society representatives that an agreement was reached on this issue and RASED, at a press conference around 17.30 on 21 September, revealed its PVT findings.

Opening, voting and counting proceeded peacefully and calmly across the governorates overall. Voting was generally well organized in 441 out of the 459 PSs visited, although there was often campaigning in close vicinity of the PCs. An extension of one hour of voting, until 20.00h, was announced for 15 out of the 23 electoral districts. On the night of 21 September, the IEC announced that 1,492,400 voters had voted, a turnout of some 36 per cent, exceeding the voter participation in past elections by some 200,000 votes. Secrecy of the ballot was respected in most PS observed. Full access to the district tabulation was not provided. Observers reported incidents in several districts such as in Karak, Madaba, Ajloun, Badia Central and Badia North. The IEC employed its information technology networks efficiently.



PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Political Context

The 20 September parliamentary election was broadly viewed as a component of an ongoing political reform process setting a noteworthy example in a region marred by violent conflict and extremism. This reform is supported by the EU¹ and other key international stakeholders. The regional developments, such as the war in Syria and the presence of hundreds of thousands of refugees in Jordan, led to a public policy widely driven by security concerns. This resulted in a tilted balance between security considerations and fundamental freedoms in favour of the former. Human rights groups have expressed concerns with regard to the full respect of the freedoms of assembly, association and expression.

King Abdullah II has been advocating comprehensive political reform based on gradual democratic transition and economic development. There were positive initiatives² including the adoption of new legislation on elections, political parties and decentralisation. The number of registered political parties increased from 18 in 2012 to 50 in 2016.

Political parties, the vast majority of which participated in the election, are regional, tribal or nation based. Attitude towards religion or tribal based affiliation are key features in assessing the political landscape. One could distinguish between Islamist, secular and 'centrist' parties.

The role of political parties remains limited and they have struggled to emerge as key actors to the public. The EU EOM acknowledges the short time span for parties to properly prepare between the adoption of the law on 15 March and the election day. Partisan candidates have formed alliances across the political spectrum but few lists feature a clear political vision or tangible programmes. However, some of the candidates affiliated to political parties either denied their affiliation or focused on their individual background or tribal base.

The formation of candidate lists in the southern governorates was mostly tribal based. In the central and northern governorates, in addition to tribal affiliations, lists were formed also on the basis of diverse socio-economic and political views held by representatives of leftist, centrist and loyalist platforms, as well as minorities.

The reform process has been criticised by some for falling short of making significant changes to date. Critics say that despite the new LPE, the next Parliament would remain fragmented, with only the IAF having a chance to appear as a more coordinated force. In addition, some allege that a considerable number of Jordanians refrain from support for political parties, which have traditionally played an insignificant role in politics.

¹ http://eeas.europa.eu/statements-eeas/2016/160805_01_en.htm.

² A National Dialogue Committee (NDC) was established and charged to assess possible amendments to both the LPE and the Law on Political Parties. The NDC was able to achieve a measure of broad agreement on a number of amendments, however some of these were not passed by the Parliament.



Legal Framework

The election is regulated by the recently amended Constitution and a number of new laws including the LPE. The LPE implements, fully or in part, a number of recommendations by the 2013 past EU EOM.³ It marks an improvement over its predecessor, although room for further improvement remains. The new legal framework, including the IEC Executive Instructions, is seen by some as promoting the role of political parties and greater participation, although skepticism remains in this regard.

Jordan is a state party to the principal international and regional human rights treaties, such as the UN ICCPR and the AChHR, which incorporated into the national legal framework.⁴ The UN Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women⁵ (CEDAW) represents a notable exception, as it was ratified by Jordan with reservations and is not part of domestic law.

The Constitutional Court (CC) and the Court of Cassation have cited international treaty standards in several rulings to the effect that such standards, in the event of doubt or conflict, take precedence over national law. The Special Bureau of Interpretation of Laws (the Bureau) is charged with interpreting laws, which have not already been interpreted by the Courts. In the absence of public oversight, the Bureau has provided a number of useful interpretations of provisions of the 2016 LPE. Both the CC and the Bureau are largely inaccessible to individual applications.

The Constitution does not protect explicitly the right to vote. Eligible to vote are citizens of Jordan born before the 24 June 1999. Members of the armed and security forces who are on active service, as well as persons declared bankrupt or mentally incapacitated, have their voting rights suspended. Such suspension restricts the universality of suffrage. Out-of-country voting is not envisaged.

Eligible to stand are registered voters who have completed the age of 30 and have held Jordanian citizenship for at least 10 years. A candidate can be registered in one district as a member of one list. Each aspiring candidate, if a civil servant, should resign from office and must pay a non-refundable deposit of 500 Jordanian Dinars (JOD). Individual candidatures are not allowed. Each list of candidates must pay a refundable deposit of 2,000 JOD as a guarantee for compliance with the rules for campaigning. Certain requirements for candidacy are unnecessarily restrictive.

A key component of the new legal framework is the introduction of an election system, where 103 of the 130 seats in the new Parliament will be decided through open list district-based proportional representation. One seat will be reserved for women candidates in each of the 12 governorates of Jordan and the three Badia districts, although, firstly, women candidates are presumed to compete on equal terms with men candidates for the 103 seats. A final 12 seats are reserved for representation of minorities in eight districts, nine seats - for Christians and three- for Chechens and Circassians. These 12 seats are allocated to minority candidates with the highest numbers of votes.

³ Notable improvements in the legal framework include strengthening of the independence of the IEC, the removal of the prohibition on candidacy to Jordanians with multiple citizenship and the introduction of a silence period 24 hours ahead of election day, http://ceas.europa.eu/eucom/missions/2013/jordan/pdf/final-report_en.pdf.

⁴ For example, the 1966 ICCPR, <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>, was published in the Official Gazette issue 4764 on 15 June 2006.

⁵ <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm>.



There are 23 electoral districts with boundaries based on the administrative borders of the 12 governorates. There is no electoral district, which includes territory of two or more governorates. Three governorates, Amman, Irbid and Az Zarqa, include more than one district, respectively five, four and two. The district borders and the numbers of seats allocated to each district were determined in a by-law, without specifying the criteria for the districting scheme. In addition to the 20 ‘geographical districts’, the by-law determines three districts, Badia North, Badia Center and Badia South, based on tribal and family structures.

The equality of the vote is assessed on the basis of an average representation norm (ARN) calculated as the ratio of the number of registered voters in any given area divided by the number of seats awarded in this area.⁶ The result is that the large urban areas are underrepresented, while sparsely populated or rural areas are considerably overrepresented, although the EU EOM noted a measure of improvement.⁷ This is at odds with the principle of equality of the vote which requires that ‘[...] the vote of one elector should be equal to the vote of another [...]’.⁸ Jordan has the legal obligation to ensure the equality of the vote.

Election Administration

The IEC is a five member body, including the Chairman, constitutionally established body mandated to administer all elections in Jordan.⁹ It delivers its responsibilities with the support of a Secretariat comprising five departments, 23 DECAs and 4,884 PCCs running the PSs, which are located in 1,483 PCs. For analysis of the tabulation of the vote after election day, the IEC established four SCs, each responsible for a designated area of Jordan, to carry out auditing of preliminary results and the allocation of seats to successful candidates. Overall, the IEC and its subordinate committees administered the election respecting legal deadlines throughout the period observed by the EU EOM.

The IEC publishes election related documents and information on its website, on social media and in the national press. Publications include Executive Instructions issued by the IEC to clarify the law, preliminary and final voter lists in conjunction with the MoI DCSP, PS and PC information, and official statements on IEC decisions. The IEC did not publish its decisions on registration or rejection of candidates and candidate lists, hence undermining transparency.

The IEC trained some 66,000 PCCs members, mainly recruited from the Ministry of Education. Training was efficient and included the distribution of a manual on election day procedures and a training CD. It was delivered by certified trainers and completed around 9 September. Additionally, 5,780 data clerks were trained to operate the electronic voter lists and implement the transmission of results process. The IEC established an interactive PCCs mapping system with real time connectivity to its central office in Amman, with a view to monitor all stages of the opening, voting and counting process.

⁶ The ARN for Jordan is $4,139,732 / 130 = 31,844.1$ voters per seat, the ARN for Ma’an (both a governorate and an electoral district) is 10,676.8, the ARN for Amman Governorate is 53,770.0 and for the electoral district Amman 2 – 66,803.7. Population numbers were not used as those available from the 13 November 2015 census included the entire resident population, <http://www.citypopulation.de/Jordan.html>, rather than only citizens.

⁷ Improvements stem mostly from the enlargement of the electoral districts compared to those of 2013 and from the assignment of seven additional seats to the three most populated governorates, including four seats to Amman, two seats to Irbid and one seat to Az Zarqa.

⁸ General Comment 25 to Article 25 of the ICCPR, Paragraph 21, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CCPR/Pages/CCPRIndex.aspx>.

⁹ As recommended by the 2013 EU EOM.



The IEC is responsible for managing the voter registration¹⁰ in conjunction with the DCSP, a branch of the MoI, which updates the civil register.¹¹ The voter lists include ‘automatically’ the names of all eligible voters. This change from “active” to “passive” voter registration led to the inclusion of some 82 per cent more voters compared to the 2013 election. After the closing of the legal timetable for voters’ requests for registration transfers, corrections and objections to the voter lists, the IEC published the final voters list (FVL) on 15 August. A total of 4,139,732 eligible voters are registered, of these 53.1 per cent are women and 46.9 per cent - men.¹² Although the FVL was closed on the 15 August, the IEC subsequently announced its intention to delete the names of deceased voters¹³ up to 10 September. However, this procedure was unclear, although the EU EOM observed that lists of deceased voters were issued to some polling stations.

By 18 August, the IEC received a total of 230 requests for list registrations and 1,293 candidates’ requests. Upon review of submitted applications, by 23 August, the IEC accepted 228 lists. By 10 September, after all deadlines for potential changes in the registered lists had expired, the IEC announced the final numbers for registered lists of candidates. The election was contested by 226 candidate lists with a total of 1,252 candidates.¹⁴ The number of non-party affiliated candidates exceeded approximately four times the number of party candidates, challenging the objective of a party based parliament. There were 252 registered women candidates, an increase of some 25 per cent compared to the 2013 election. A total of 170 former Members of the Jordanian Parliament were running mostly as non-party candidates. The vast majority of candidates complied with the conditions for candidacy. Overall, the registration of candidates by the IEC was accomplished in an inclusive, efficient and timely manner.

In an interview of 31 August¹⁵ with a similar message of 18 September,¹⁶ the IEC communicated its intention to take legal action should an observer group publish PVT results before the IEC. There is no provision in the LPE regarding the conduct of and the public disclosure of the PVT results.¹⁷ Restricting the freedom of expression of CSOs and imparting information is not in line with the international legal obligations of Jordan.¹⁸ The EU EOM was informed by both the IEC and civil society representatives that an agreement was reached on this issue and RASED, at a press conference at 17.30 on 21 September, revealed its PVT findings.

Against the backdrop of a perceived widespread lack of voter interest, the election timeline did not allow early implementation of voter education programmes. Notwithstanding, the IEC engaged,

¹⁰ The IEC issued Executive Instruction 1/2016, on the Development of the Voters List.

¹¹ The Civil Registry and Passports Department updates the civil registry twice a year. Ineligible voters and the names of deceased persons are removed from the list, Election Law, article 4 C and D.

¹² For the 2013 parliamentary elections the IEC registered a total of 2,212,182 voters, yet the number of eligible voters was considered to be around 3.64 million. The fact that voters needed to register and collect a voter’s card in order to be able to vote contributed to the decreased numbers of registered voters.

¹³ Executive Instruction 1/2016 Article 20 E.

¹⁴ Four candidate lists were refused registration for various reasons throughout the process. Candidates rejected by the IEC were 20, of these 18 appealed against the IEC decisions and only one candidate was reinstated by the Court. Voters’ appeals against candidatures were 31. Of the latter, only two candidates were finally rejected by the Court. Further details for the judicial procedures related to registration are provided in Section ‘Electoral Disputes’.

¹⁵ <http://www.alanbatnews.net/onews/local-news/139176.html>.

¹⁶ Ammonnews.net/print/282796.

¹⁷ In 2013, RASED, a coalition of national CSOs for observation of the 20 September parliamentary elections, conducted a PVT as well.

¹⁸ ICCPR Article 19.



along with CSOs and public institutions,¹⁹ in vigorous and diversified outreach activities. The impact of the latter was further hampered by the complexities of the new election system.

Campaign

The electoral campaign started on 16 August and continued until 18 September allowing for a day of campaign silence, on 19 September. Overall, the campaign was peaceful, with isolated reports of minor campaign related incidents. Candidates campaigned actively by holding public meetings and debates targeting increased voter outreach. Most lists did not present concrete programmes. Instead they displayed loose slogans, difficult, if at all possible, to translate into political agendas.

Most frequently campaigning was conducted by posters in the main roads featuring the candidates' lists, but also individual candidates' pictures, and by social gatherings in the 'campaign tents'. According to press reports and some interlocutors, these gatherings might be a venue where gifts and money change hands, however EU observers did not witness such cases. Campaign rallies were a rarely used method for campaign activities.

By 18 September, the IEC recorded 191 cases of breaches to the regulations for campaign activities. Most violations were related for use of public buildings, traffic lights and road signs for advertisement. A minor number of cases included use of the IEC logo on the candidates' banners and Facebook pages, using the state Coat of Arms and vandalizing other candidates' pictures and banners. As a result, wrongfully placed campaign materials were removed.

A recent by-law²⁰ introduced new criteria for funding political party campaigns including positive incentives for winning seats, and enhanced female and regional membership. Candidates without declared party affiliation are entirely self funding, subject to predefined spending limits. As candidates' audit reports are only to be submitted after the election to the IEC upon request, there is a potential for leniency in the ultimate enforcement of the regulations in the post-election period.

The DEC's were operating as coordination committees to supervise the electoral campaign and implement the campaigning regulations in all governorates. Relevant government institutions, municipalities, municipal and local councils, or commissioners of electoral lists or any of its candidates coordinated the removal of electoral campaign posters in breach of the regulations. on roads and near road circles that could affect traffic safety.²¹

Three out of eight media monitored by the EU EOM violated the campaign silence period by publishing and airing electoral lists and candidates' advertisements on 19 September. While private TV channel Josat TV broadcasted spots of 12 different electoral lists, newspapers Al Rai and Al Ghad published respectively advertisements of 10 and three different candidates or lists.

Media

Although no specific restrictions on electoral media coverage were observed, media operated in an environment considered as partially free. The current media legal framework, restrictive and at times vague, results in self-censorship in the local press. During the observation period, three orders

¹⁹ Such as the Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs and the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

²⁰ By-law 54/2016 of 27 July 2016, effective from 1 September 2016; according to the Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs, 29 out of 50 registered parties were eligible to request an advance of 20,000 JOD and 12 parties had received this advance as of 18 September.

²¹ Executive Instruction 7/2016, Article 11.



banning media reports on other specific topics, including the Royal Family, were issued by the Attorney General and the Jordan Media Commission, limiting fundamental freedoms guaranteed under international²² and national²³ laws.

Media made good efforts to inform voters about the new electoral system and encourage voters' participation. IEC public awareness and voter education spots were aired, free of charge, by radio and TV stations on a daily basis. However, both state owned Jordan Radio and TV and some private media²⁴ chose not to cover any campaign activity in their news programmes with a view to keep neutrality and impartiality. This approach limited the access of candidates to media and deprived voters of receiving information about electoral contestants. In addition, candidates could not buy airtime either on state owned TV or Radio for campaign advertising, as these media sought to avoid that candidates with substantial financial resources get advantage over those with more limited ones. A significant number of candidates used social media as main tool for campaigning.

The role of media during elections is weakly regulated to date. The LPE refers only to state owned media when establishing general provisions on impartiality and equality, and do not provide for allocation of free airtime for electoral contestants in the state owned media. In a welcome development during the monitored period, Jordan TV broadcast six days a week a special election program "Debate 2016" where candidates had the opportunity to present their political proposals free of charge.

EU EOM media findings showed unbalances in the electoral coverage by several media. During the monitoring period,²⁵ *Al Rai* newspaper allocated 14.8 per cent of its electoral campaign coverage in positive tone to candidate Amjad Almaslamani and his list Al Quds. *Assabeel* newspaper allocated 78.3 per cent of its coverage to IAF and its National Coalition for Reform mostly in positive tone and Josat TV allocated 56.4 per cent of campaign coverage to candidate Roula Alhoroub and the Souat Alhaq list mostly in positive tone.

Electoral Disputes

Express rights of appeal against IEC decisions include a voters' right of appeal to a Court of First Instance against an IEC decision to include another voter in the voter lists, a voters' right of appeal to the Court of Appeal against the registration of a candidate within the voter's electoral district and a candidate's or list's right of appeal to a Court of Appeal against a rejection of registration by the IEC. The decisions of the Courts are final, without the possibility for further recourse.

One action was filed with the Amman Court of Appeal for members of the Bedouin community seeking re-registration in the Badia North electoral district. The Court rejected the application on the ground that the final voter list was closed in accordance with the law on 15 August.

Thirty one (31) voter applications were filed alleging failure to fulfil requirements of candidacy. Only two of the 31 applications were accepted resulting in the rejection of the candidates concerned. Accusations of political partisanship of the Courts, by one rejected candidate, did not stand up to scrutiny. Additionally, the voter appeal process against registrations did not seem to have been, at

²² ICCPR Article 19.

²³ Constitution Article 15.

²⁴ For example, Roya TV.

²⁵ From 30 August to 18 September 2016 the EU EOM monitored Jordan TV, Jordan Radio, *Al Rai* newspaper and the private media Josat TV, Roya TV, Radio Al Balad, *Al Ghad* and *Assabeel* newspapers.



least widely, politically abused by candidates against other candidates. While the Courts discharged the candidate appeals in an impartial and timely manner, the absence of a second recourse of appeal left some uncertainty as regards to particular aspects on the rules for candidacy.

Participation of Women, Minorities and Persons with Disabilities

Notwithstanding the increase of women candidates, the absence of a constitutional guarantee against discrimination of women continues to underpin their historically low political representation. The introduction of the proportional system for the majority of seats seems to have encouraged participation of female candidates, but considerable room for improvement remains. On the average, there is one female candidate per list. Additionally, a wide political and social perception that women are running primarily for reserved seats and not for the open list seats is reflected in list posters citing their woman candidate as a “quota candidate”, a fact which has led the Jordanian National Commission for Women to demand a halt to the use of term “quota” in connection with female candidacies. Significant attention was paid by the media to the importance of women participation and the interpretation of the legal provisions about women quota.

Some limited special provisions are contained within Executive Instruction 9/2016 relating to the provision of assistance to person with disabilities. Those with mental disabilities appear to be the subject of arbitrary provisions in the law which do not accord with international standards.

There is no express recognition of ethnic or religious minority groups in the Constitution, however the numerous provisions in the legislative framework providing for the reservation of seats for Christians and Circassians, and special districts attest to the fact that the state recognises the existence of such groups. The methodology of calculating the winners of seats in the open lists, in districts where such seats are reserved, operated as a cap rather than a minimum threshold of representation.

Election Observation

In an inclusive and timely manner, the IEC accredited 17 civil society organisations (CSO) with 13,398 national observers and 33 organisations with 488 international observers.

The Civilian Society Coalition for Monitoring the Jordanian Parliamentary Elections, RASSED, accredited 7,561 observers to monitor all 4,884 PCCs and conducted a PVT. The EU funded Integrity Coalition for Election Observation deployed 2,350 to all 1,483 PCs. A woman’s platform, ‘An Eye on Women in Elections’, accredited 1,111 observers as well. Representatives of some CSOs expressed doubts in regard to the IEC’s capacity to fully respond to transparency requirements in conducting the electoral process. CSO observers are still obliged to report possible irregularities first to the IEC and only after that to make them public.

In addition to the EU EOM, the largest international election observation mission, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI) deployed a joint EOM. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and a number of regional organisations including the League of Arab States, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and the Arab Parliament also observed the 20 September election.



Election Day

Opening of PSs and voting proceeded peacefully and calmly across the governorates overall. An extension of one hour of voting, until 20.00, was announced for 15 out of 23 electoral districts. In Amman, Zarqa, Irbid, Balqa, Madaba, Jerash and Ajloun a total of 70,387 voters were able to vote during this one hour extension time. On the night of 21 September, the IEC announced on that 1,492,400 voters had voted, a turnout of some 36 per cent, exceeding the total of 1,299,043 voters that participated in the 2013 parliamentary election.

The EU EOM observers visited a total of 459 PS and reported a well organised process in 441 PS. Counting was observed in 39 PSs and assessed as orderly, and procedures were largely followed. Secrecy of the ballot was mostly respected, however in 37 of the 462 visited polling station observers noted that voters did not mark their ballots in secrecy. At this stage only minor procedural problems were reported by the EU EOM observers. The tabulation of results at 39 visited PCs was overall well-organised. At district sub-offices the process of materials and results forms intake was observed to be inefficient and locations were often overcrowded.

EU EOM observers visited 23 district tabulation centres. The tabulation process was followed on a screen while PCs results sheets were being uploaded by the IT clerk for public screening. Full access to the district tabulation process was not offered. Robust security for PSs, PCs and District Tabulation Centres was put in place, with police guarding the entrance to all locations.

Some observers reported instances of unrest that impacted negatively on the process. EU EOM reported incidents in several districts such as in Karak, Madaba, Ajloun, Badia Central and Badia North. In Ajloun district the sub-office closed due to unrest and riot police used tear gas. In Madaba, riot police dispersed a group of people trying to enter the DEC.

The IEC employed its information technology networks efficiently. It made good efforts to communicate with the public during election day. Voting turnout figures were shared at the Media Centre throughout the day. The 24 hour campaign silence before election day was partially respected, however on election day observers reported widespread illegal campaign activities and materials around polling centres.

Mission Information

The IEC and the MFA of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan signed Memoranda of Understanding with the EU on 27 July 2016 and on 21 August 2016 and, on behalf of the EU with regard to the modalities for election observation, in line with EU election observation methodology. The EU EOM was deployed to Jordan on 13 August 2016 following an invitation from the IEC. In total, the EU EOM deployed 108 observers from all 28 EU Member States, Canada, Norway and Switzerland across the governorates to assess the entire electoral process in accordance with international standards and commitments for democratic elections as well as the laws of Jordan. The European Parliament Delegation endorses this Preliminary Statement. The EU EOM is independent in its findings and adheres to the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation signed at the United Nations on 27 October 2005.

On election day, observers visited over 459 polling stations in all 23 electoral districts of Jordan to observe voting, counting and tabulation of results. The EU EOM will remain in Jordan until the completion of the electoral process. The mission wishes to express its appreciation to the representatives of the Jordanian authorities, political parties and civil society, and the people of Jordan for their cooperation in the course of the observation.