

ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION REPORT



30 April 2014

Dohuk (Nohadra), Iraq



Iraqi Council of Representatives Elections
And KRG Governorate Council Elections

UNREPRESENTED NATIONS AND PEOPLES ORGANIZATION
ASSYRIA COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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Content

Introduction	2
Mission Methodology	3
Electoral System in Iraq	5
Independent High Electoral Commission	6
Electoral Campaign	7
Participation of Women	8
Participation of National Minorities	9
EOM Observations: Casting Votes on Election Day	11
EOM Observations: Counting Votes on Election Day	14
Special Election Day, 28 April 2014	15
Media Coverage and Reports of Irregularities	17
Recommendations to IHEC	18
Recommendations to the Government of the Republic of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government	18
Annex 1: Final Results of the Council of Representatives Election	19
Annex 2: Final Results of the Governorate Council Elections (KRG)	20
Annex 3: About UNPO and ACE	23
Annex 4: Delegate Profiles	24



Introduction

On April 30th, 2014, Iraqi people were invited to vote to elect new members to the Council of Representatives. This was the third time Parliamentary elections took place since the fall of Saddam Hussein, pledging more democracy and credible law-making processes.

In total, 100 political entities and 9200 candidates competed for 328 seats, while 8 seats were reserved for the minority components in Iraq, in order to guarantee their political representation in the Council of Representatives. In addition to this arrangement, the quota for female representatives ensured their presence in the Parliament with a number of 82 seats, or 25%. 12 of the total amount of seats, including 1 minority component seat for the Council of Representatives, were elected in the Dohuk Governorate.

Iraqis in the autonomous Kurdish Region head to the polls not only to select the members of the Council of Representatives, but also to elect new representatives to the three governorate councils; namely the Dohuk, Sulaimaniya and Erbil Governorates in Iraqi Kurdistan. Kurdish parties thus competed with a double task: to ensure as many candidates as possible both to the governorate councils, which jointly have 90 seats in total with 9 seats reserved for minority components, and to ensure they deliver members to the Iraqi Council of Representatives.

The joint UNPO-ACE Election Observation Mission (EOM) observed the process of both of the above-mentioned elections in the city of Dohuk, the capital of the Dohuk Governorate, located in Iraqi Kurdistan in northern Iraq. In Dohuk (Syriac: Nohadra), 264 polling stations were arranged for 612,065 registered voters. 30 different observations were made in polling stations across 18 different polling centers by the EOM. The duties and principles of the observation teams were regulated by Iraqi and Kurdish electoral law, reflected by the regulations of the Independent High Electoral Commission.

Both the positive observations and the irregularities the EOM noticed are described in full in this report and are believed to contribute to the increasing efforts of Independent High Electoral Commission to implement fair and transparent elections. However, while presenting the observations, it should be stated that it is not intended to underestimate the obstacles and complexities that are faced by the responsible authorities in the electoral process. The efforts of IHEC and their professionalism are certainly believed by the EOM as important developments that will promote more political participation and democracy in the country. Therefore, the EOM congratulates the Iraqi Independent High Electoral Commission for conducting two elections on the same day across 18 provinces in the country.

Mission Methodology

The joint UNPO-ACE Election Observation Mission (EOM) was deployed in the city of Dohuk (Nohadra), the capital of the Dohuk Governorate, located in the autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan in northern Iraq. 30 different observations were made in polling stations across 18 different polling centers. Most of the observed polling centers were located in urban areas, and a few observations were made in suburban and rural areas in the vicinity of Dohuk (Nohadra).

District	Polling Center	PC number
Dohuk	Karwan School	123407
Kocher	Midia School	123303
Dohuk	Nowruz School	123404
South Seagrga	Amed secondary School	323203
Dohuk	Ashti	123403
Dohuk	Sina elementary school	323202
Semele	Beyan	123605
Semele	Sheydan	123604
Rundhi	Jakarkhwin	1232
Galy	khabat School	123304
Semele	Hafid	123608
Dohuk	Zevrin	223408
Dohuk	Masik	223406
Dohuk	Garebase	12310
Dohuk	Mitan School	223407
Dohuk	Dohuk School	123408
Dohuk	Salahadin	123402
Dohuk	Kurdistan School	123405

The EOM had the chance to witness the opening of two different polling centers, and the closing and counting procedures in three different polling stations across two polling centers.

UNPO and ACE conducted a joint EOM in 2009 to the Nineveh Plain, focusing on the region's ethnic and religious components and their participation in the electoral process. The current EOM was a follow up to this previous collaboration, considering the critical observations that had been made and the alarming reports that were received from Assyrian¹ communities over the past years. In fact, UNPO and ACE intended to observe the Iraqi Kurdistan parliamentary and provincial elections of respectively September

¹ The Iraqi Christian community includes Armenians and Chaldo-Assyrians belonging mainly to the Chaldean Catholic, Syriac Orthodox, Syrian Catholic, Armenian Catholic, Armenian Orthodox churches, and the Assyrian Church of the East. (IILHR, Iraq's Minorities and Other Vulnerable Groups: Legal Framework, Documentation and Human Rights, 2013, p. 77)

and November 2013, but failed to receive accreditation. In an attempt to observe the April 2013 elections, the mission decided to request accreditation on behalf of UNPO only.

This time, the EOM focused on the area of Dohuk (Nohadra), which has a large Assyrian community. The relative stable and secure environment in the Kurdistan Autonomous Region was an incentive, considering that the EOM could easily move from one polling station to the other. In addition, very few international observers had been deployed to Dohuk (Nohadra), in past and present times. Prior to Election Day, the EOM introduced itself to the director of the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) in Dohuk (Nohadra). The delegates were welcomed and invited to ask questions about IHEC's work, the elections and the voting procedures.

Electoral System in Iraq

According to the Iraqi Election Law (45) of 2013, there are 320 directly elected members and 8 reserved seats in the **Council of Representatives**. The representatives are elected to serve 4-year terms and are responsible for electing both the President and the Prime Minister, who serve for the same amount of time. 18 governorate-based constituencies share 320 seats based on their administrative boundaries while the remaining seats are reserved for components namely Christians (5), Yezidi (1), Sabean Mandaean (1) and Shabaki (1), in 5 different governorates. Seats are calculated according to the Sainte-Laguë method, in order to avoid discrimination against smaller parties.

In Iraq, it was decided that an electoral system of open-list proportional representation would be adopted both for the elections to choose the members of the Council of Representatives and the Governorate Council in Kurdistan Region. As a country with various ethnic and religious components, proportional representation system is an encouraging and well-accommodating system for the different political entities and groups in Iraq, to let them expand in size and to have the opportunity to participate in governmental coalitions.

In an open-list system, voters choose individual candidates out of the list that was decided by each party; however the order of the list does not affect the elections and each candidate is elected according to the popular vote they get. Therefore, candidates possess the right to leave their initial political parties after the elections since they were elected individually. The candidate who secures the highest number of votes on the list is elected and the quota rules introduced by law to secure women's participation in the political system ensure that a woman candidate is elected after every three winning male candidates. The open list system also provides the possibility to vote for a party in general, and thus for all candidates in the order they appear on the list.

On the other side, elections for the **Governorate Councils** for the three governorates in the Iraq-Kurdistan Region are governed by amended Law No. (4) of 2009 on Governorate, District and Sub-District Council Elections to choose the members of the three councils which jointly consist of 90 seats in total. There are 9 seats reserved in this number for minority and ethnic groups such as Chaldeans/Assyrian/Syriacs, Armenians and Turkmens.

IHEC conducted a voters' registry update recently between November and December 2013 across the country, yet no separate registry was conducted for Governorate Council elections in Kurdistan Region. Results are managed at Branch Counting and Sorting centers in governorates while staff recounts the ballots for Council of Representatives election. However, for the Governorate Council elections in the Kurdistan region, there is no recount of votes. These ballots were directly transported to the Data Entry Centre.

Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC)

Established under the amended Law No. (11) of 2007 in Iraq, the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) functions as the exclusive electoral authority, assigned to organize, manage and supervise free and fair elections across the country. According to Article No. (102), the IHEC is a constitutional institution and a governmental, impartial body with a legal personality, which is supervised by the Council of Representatives.

IHEC consists of Electoral Administration (EA), as the executive and administrative part, and Board of Commissioners (BoC), which is responsible for deciding on the general policies on electoral policies, management and monitoring the conduct of EA. Electoral Administration consists of the IHEC HQ and 19 Governorate Electoral Offices in addition to the Kurdistan Regional Office.

The electoral regulations issued by IHEC are to determine the complementary procedures to be followed during the election processes. Prior to the Election Day, IHEC is responsible for completing voters' registration in its 1096 centers in Iraq with the aim of confirming a transparent, updated list. Certification of the final candidates' list and declaration of the final results after the elections or referenda are other important tasks that are carried out by IHEC. Before announcing the results, IHEC implements a result management process in the Branch Counting and Sorting Centers in the governorates, where the staff recounts ballots from the polling stations. The Data Entry Center of IHEC then tabulates and announces the provisional results. IHEC is authorized to announce the final results of the elections; however as the responsible organ to receive complaints about the electoral process from voters, Political Entity Agents (PEAs) and observers, these complaints and reports should be adjudicated first before announcing the results.

Governorate council elections in the Kurdistan region are conducted by IHEC due to its mandate by Law. However, this mission is announced to be later on transferred to the Independent High Electoral and Referendum Commission of the Kurdistan Regional Government, once this institution is successfully established in the future.

Although announced as an autonomous and neutral institution, IHEC struggles with political interference and recently has been in subject to intense conflict between the legislative and judiciary organs in the country. One statement suggests that, this conflict that puts pressure on IHEC's functions is a result of the conflicting rulings from the Parliament and the Judiciary, regarding divergent interpretations of the electoral law. In order to protest against this conflict and to preserve the Commission's "*independence and professionalism*", the entire IHEC Board of Commissioners tendered their resignation on Tuesday 25th of March 2014, just one month before the elections. However, in order not to block the way of Iraq's political and electoral process, the commissioners decided to withdraw their mass resignation in response to official, local and international calls they received.

Electoral Campaign

Regulation No. (7) Preamble for the Iraqi Parliamentary Elections was issued in 2013 by IHEC for Council of Representatives elections in order to monitor the persuasion campaigns conducted legitimately by political entities, coalitions or candidates to urge voters to cast their votes in the region. This regulation states that electoral campaigns can continue up until 24 hours prior to the day of regular polling across Iraq. For the Governorate Council Elections in Kurdistan Region, it is stated in Law No. (4) of 2009, Article 21, that the electoral campaigns are launched after IHEC certifies the final candidates list in autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan and must end until 48 hours before the polling.

In the Kurdistan Region it is furthermore specifically prohibited to use premises which are used by ministries and institutions during the electoral campaigning processes.



Campaign materials present near the polling center (Dohuk, 30 April 2014)

Both regulations for the electoral campaign of Kurdistan Region elections and Parliamentary elections include some conditions to be respected such as prohibition of adhesive materials or writing on walls, false statements, and ideas calling for ethnicity, religion, tribalism or regionalism. It is forbidden to practice violence, hatred, any form of pressure or to submit presents, donations or money to voters to influence their political will. Campaigning cannot be displayed in government buildings or polling locations.

It was stated by the Vice-Chairperson of the Board of Commissioners (BoC), Mr. Qatia al Zobay during a press release organized by the representatives of IHEC on the 12th of April that IHEC's settlements on electoral campaign impose strict sanctions for the candidates who may violate the regulations.

Electoral Campaign Regulation No. (6) clearly states under Article 3 that any posters, advertisements, programs or candidate pictures are not allowed inside of the polling centers. However, during the observations, campaign materials were noted in the vicinity of the polling station. Especially the political party flags seemed to pose a problem, since these could not be removed very easily.

Although the electoral law has been shaped democratically, the absence of law to regulate and control the activities and the budgetary decisions of the political parties in their campaign is an issue.

Participation of Women



Campaign posters of female candidates (Dohuk)

According to Article 49.4 of the Iraqi Constitution, “the elections law shall aim to achieve a percentage of representation for women of not less than one-quarter of the members of the Council of Representatives.” Regulation No (21) issued by IHEC in 2010 also guarantees the participation of women in the elections by providing a quota for the number of seats they possess in the Council. The regulation requires the political parties to submit their lists of candidates prior to the elections to IHEC with a number of female candidates, amounting to no less than 25% of the total number. In the 2014 elections, 2500 women candidates were officially listed by IHEC to compete over seats in the Iraqi Parliament, reaching the 25% quota. The electoral Law states that if the number of elected women is not sufficient to satisfy the quota criteria, 25% of the seats are reserved for women through a set of procedures by which each governorate determines the number of women to be included in the final list of winners, including those who gained most votes among other female candidates but did not win sufficient votes to win seats.

Furthermore, the law provides a quota for women representation in the Governorate Council in the Kurdistan region in Iraq to guarantee a number of women not less than 30% of the total membership. Thus, candidates' lists must be arranged accordingly.

During the observations women were observed to be participating in the electoral campaigning process in Dohuk (Nohadra); however it is also known that some women candidates refused to have their pictures publicly displayed and instead used a picture of a husband, father or a brother on their electoral posters.

Participation of National Minorities

In order to increase the political representation of minority groups in the Council of Representatives, the 2013 Elections Law increased the size of the Council from 325 members to 328 members. The new system apportions 320 seats among 18 governorates and 8 are reserved to minority components.

- 5 seats for the Christian component distributed to Baghdad, Nineveh, Kirkuk, Dohuk and Erbil governorates
- 1 seat for the Yezidi component in the Nineveh governorate
- 1 seat for the Sabeian Mandaian in Baghdad governorate
- 1 seat for the Shabaki component in the Nineveh governorate

In September 2008, Article 50 of the Law No (4) Governorate Elections Law, which provided seats in the governorate councils to minority groups such as the Assyrians, Yezidi and Shabak, was removed from the Law by the Parliament in Iraq. Although Article 50 did not allocate enough seats to minority groups as proportional to their population (such as 1 representative for the Yezidi population of 600,000), the removal of this Article received negative reactions and criticisms domestically and internationally.

Demonstrations and campaigns focused on the fact that it deprived the minority communities in Iraq of their rights to be legally represented in the government and to have a say in the country's political decision-making process. The Provincial elections in 2009 were governed by this revised law and since it included some parts which would require distribution of the votes from the smaller Iraqi parties to bigger parties, in the case where the votes of the less powerful parties will not make any difference in their results. As a consequence, it was decided that the remaining seats were to be allocated to the largest remainder, favoring the winning parties and increasing concerns about minority representation by small parties. In order to avoid problems in 2013 Provincial elections in this regard, a Parliamentary committee was formed. Following these developments, the Iraqi Parliament made necessary amendments in Law No. (4), to be applied in 2014 Governorate Elections and confirmed 9 reserved seats for minority components in Iraqi Kurdistan. According to Article 32 in the Kurdistan Governorate Council;

- 2 seats are reserved for the component of Chaldeans, Assyrian and Syrians in the Dohuk governorate council competed for by the component candidates.
- 1 seat for the Armenian component in the Dohuk governorate council competed for by the component candidates.
- 1 seat for the component of Chaldeans, Assyrian and Syrians in the Sulaimaniya governorate council competed for by the component candidates.
- 2 seats for the component of Chaldeans, Assyrian and Syrians in the Erbil governorate council competed for by the component candidates.
- 3 seats for the Turkmen component in the Erbil governorate council competed for by component candidates.

Political entities of minority communities that took part in the 30 April 2014 elections:

Turkmen component	Kirkuk Turkoman Front Coalition (280), Coalition of Kirkuk Turkeman (282), Iraq Turkeman Front (206)
Assyrian component	Sons of Mesopotamia (298), Al-Warkaa Democratic List (299), Al-Rafidain List or Zowaa (300), Bet Nahrain National Coalition (301), Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council (302), Babylon List (303), Souraya National Coalition (304), Ur National List (305), Shlama Entitiy (306)
Yezidi component	Izadi Movement of Reform and Progress (291), Izadi Democratic Front (292)

Three communal groups, a majority of Shi'a Arabs, a minority of Sunni Arabs and a minority of ethnic Kurdish people, enjoy an overwhelming majority in Iraq, and are therefore able to enjoy political representation and competition. However, the minority groups in Iraq, such as the Assyrians, are not able to represent their interests or concerns on the political stage, due to the absence of recognition and protection of their minority status. While ignoring the indigenous or ethnic identities, the Iraqi government treats minority groups as religious minorities. Therefore, some groups have been seeking to identify with larger religious groups in order to be represented and recognized.

In Law No. 4 on Governorate, District and Sub-district Council Elections in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, under article 32 (5) it is marked that "each component's candidate shall be elected by voters of the same component." However, this arrangement is not put into practice adequately and thus constitutes one of the major grievances of the minority components in Iraq. Based on conversations with representatives from these communities, they consider the reserved seats not guaranteeing their representation considering that everyone is able to vote on minority component's lists. Taking into account the small number of individuals from minority components, it is very easy for non-minority components to allocate a part of their votes to these minority lists. It is furthermore believed that certain minority political parties are set up especially with this aim. As a consequence, the minority parties securing the reserved seats can easily be controlled and are hardly representative of the minority communities. These grievances were already conveyed on an international level, such as the United Nations. However, it was time and again stated that introducing an electoral system whereby only individuals from minority components can vote for minority political parties is not democratic.

Other concerns can be mentioned firstly as the inability of the representatives of minority communities, such as the Assyrians, to reach their legally reserved seat in the Council of Representatives since major political parties make their own members belonging to particular minority groups to run for those seats. These decisions are considered as efforts of senior identities to push the minor groups from their own identities and to dissolve them into senior ones. Furthermore, some groups fail to achieve a seat in the parliament since their votes are dispersed among different election lists based on ethnicity (Kurdish lists) or sect (Shiite lists), as they do not have independent political representation rights.

Voting Procedure

Polling stations across Iraqi Kurdistan opened at 7:00 am and closed at 6:00 pm (5:00 pm in the rest of Iraq). Polling staff were required to vote before 7:00 am. Any voters who presented themselves at the polling center after 6:00 pm were not allowed to vote anymore. At the time of the observation, there seemed to be confusion about the procedure for people who presented themselves before 6:00 pm but would not be able to cast their vote in time. However, in none of the observed polling centers was this the case. Voters were required to present their electronic voter card and a valid identification document with photo. After voter verification, the name of the voter was ticked off a handwritten list and the voter was asked to sign (or put a fingerprint in case of illiteracy) next to his or her name. As a next step, the voter was required to insert his or her electronic voter card in the IHEC card reader, and make a fingerprint onto a biometric reader. Subsequently, the barcodes that were present on the two ballots (for the two different elections) were scanned by the same card reader. Voters were handed over the two ballots and went to vote in cardboard booths. After voting, the folded ballots were put in two different boxes, and voters were required to dip their finger in blue ink.

Positive Observations

In the different polling stations that were visited on 30 April 2014, the atmosphere in general was very **professional**. Overall, IHEC staff seemed well trained and aware of their responsibilities. Few queues were observed, and voting happened in a relatively **calm environment**. Since voting day was declared a holiday, this atmosphere was also reflected on the streets and areas near the polling centers.

The polling centers and stations had an **adequate layout**. Most of them were located in elementary school buildings, where the different classrooms served as polling stations. Occasionally, security personnel directed voters and observers to a security screening upon arrival.

IHEC staff welcomed the EOM in the different polling stations and provided all necessary information. In most instances, the EOM was asked to sign up in an observer registration book, reflecting the rights and responsibilities of both parties in the observation process.

IHEC had provided all polling stations with **sufficient material**. As was witnessed during the closing of the polling stations, all materials had corresponding containers and bags.

In every polling station the EOM visited, **domestic observers** were present. These individuals, who were mostly representatives of political parties, seemed very engaged and observed the voting and counting procedures in a very critical way.

Critical Observations

Voter Registration

On several occasions in different polling stations, problems were encountered with **voter identification and registration**. One head of a polling station stated he had to turn away one individual, because his name had not appeared on the list. Especially the **electronic card reader** seemed to pose problems in different polling stations. Many heads of polling stations complained that the machines were working too slowly. In one instance, the machine had completely broken down. Another issue was the **fingerprint** that voters were required to make on a biometric reader. Especially with older people, this did not always seem to function well.

The EOM had the opportunity to speak to one Assyrian family from Baghdad. They had an official status as **Internally Displaced Person (IDP)** and were thus required to vote on Special Election Day, 28 April 2014. When presenting themselves at the designated polling station, they were informed that they should come back and vote on 30 April. When trying to do so, the polling station was closed. The family tried four polling stations in their neighborhood, but could not find a polling station where they were registered.

Unauthorized individuals

Several unauthorized individuals were observed in different polling stations. In some instances, they were considered to be **security personnel** by IHEC staff, although they did not present or wear any form of identification. In some instances, groups of unidentified men with clearly a security background were standing at the entrance of the polling center, behind the legitimate security personnel.

Some individuals inside the polling centers **assumed roles** they were not entitled to. For example, the brother of one head of the polling center showed the EOM around. On another occasion, a representative from a local NGO guided the EOM and indicated which polling stations in the center should be visited.

Secret Voting

Violations of the Electoral Law were most clearly occurring with regard to secret voting. On numerous occasions, **family voting** took place. This means that mainly male family members (fathers, brothers) were voting on behalf of their wives and daughters. Children of all ages tended to assist their parents as well. IHEC personnel did not verify whether the accompanying person was indeed a family member. According to the Electoral Law, a person can be accompanied in the booth by a family member up to the 4th grade. According to the same law, a person can request **assistance** of the head of polling station. This occurred during many observations, although the person assisting was not always the head of the polling station but IHEC staff. On one occasion, two IHEC staff members were assisting one older woman. Overall, the voting atmosphere was **not very secret**. One voter shouted the name of the political party she would vote for. On another occasion, voters were looking inside the booths next to them.

The worst violation took place by an IHEC staff member who was in charge of overseeing the process of inserting the ballots in the boxes, and dipping the finger in the blue ink. The staff member was handed a ballot by a voter, opened the paper and looked at the content, after which the ballot was put in the correct box.

Polling Station Staff and Observers

On only one occasion did the EOM encounter a negative attitude from the head of the polling center. EOM delegates were asked to identify themselves twice, despite possessing IHEC badges, and had to wait a long time before the responsible was available. The head of the polling center did not seem motivated to provide the EOM with the requested information, and could not inform the EOM about the amount of registered voters. However, it needs to be stressed that this was the exception; in all other instances, IHEC personnel was very helpful and welcoming.

In one instance, the head of a polling station did not seem impartial when running out of the polling center, leaving his post, to **greet a senior party official**.

Domestic observers were present in all polling stations where the EOM conducted observations. However, it seems that big political parties with more volunteers would have a higher capacity to ensure observers in every polling station, unlike small parties.

After the closing of one polling station, the EOM was asked for a statement on the elections by domestic observers from a specific political party. When refusing to do so, in accordance to the code of conduct for international observers, the EOM was asked for their names and coordinates. By some EOM members this was experienced as a form of **intimidation**.

Other

One voter told the EOM his employer told him to vote for a specific political party; otherwise he would not be paid his salary for that month.

One voter voted while he already had one blue finger. He walked out of the polling station with one blue finger on each hand.

Counting Procedure

Sorting and counting of the ballots started at 6:00 pm after the closure of the polling centers (5:00 pm in the rest of Iraq). In general, procedures seemed to be followed strictly and IHEC staff seemed well trained. The card reader printed an overview of the numbers of all ballot forms that had been registered when scanning their barcodes. The number of ballots on this print needed to correspond with the number of voters who signed the registration book. The ballots were dumped onto a large surface, and the empty ballot box was shown to the observers. Ballots were subsequently counted and sorted by IHEC staff. Invalid votes were shown to domestic and international observers, and upon consent by all present parties, the ballot was declared invalid and put in a special envelope. The results per political party and per candidate were marked down on a special form. Special bags and boxes were present to store all equipment, ballots and other materials. At the end of the count, all ballots and forms were transported to the *Data Entry Center* of IHEC for tabulation. A recount does not take place for the Governorate Council Elections. The ballots for the Council of Representatives Elections were to be recounted at the Branch Counting and Sorting Center.

Positive Observations

From the moment the polling station closed, counting procedures were strictly followed in the three observed stations. Again, IHEC staff seemed very well trained and aware of the different steps in counting the ballots, and the overall process was conducted in a **professional** manner.

The role of **domestic observers** was very important at this stage. They had to approve of all actions conducted by IHEC personnel, and seemed very engaged. For example, whenever a ballot was declared invalid, all observers needed to approve of this before the ballot was put aside. They could furthermore note down the results of the Governorate Council Elections per polling station. Considering there would not be a recount of these ballots, this is extremely important.

Critical Observations

When putting ballots together per political party, and per political candidate, the different rolls of ballots were marked with **post-its**. This does not seem to be the most efficient and secure way to mark ballots. The **sorting** of the ballot papers could be done in a more efficient and faster way. In one polling station, people were using their phones and were **smoking**. The **door** in one observed polling station was not closed until one hour after counting had begun.

Special Election Day, 28 April 2014

The EOM did not have the opportunity to observe Special Election Day on 28 April 2014, when security personnel, IDP's and hospitalized individuals cast their votes. However, considering the complaints that were conveyed to the EOM, it was decided to include a section of this report on this special voting. It needs to be noted that the narrative below is thus not based on EOM observations as such, but on information that was conveyed to the EOM while present in Dohuk (Nohadra).

First of all, the EOM wishes to refer to the aforementioned grievances by individuals from minority communities, notably the Assyrians, about the practice whereby non-minority individuals can vote for minority lists. As a consequence, minority groups do not consider their reserved seats to be adequately representing their communities, especially not when new minority parties are set up a couple of weeks prior to the elections and have a clear affiliation to bigger political parties. Taking into account that dominant political parties can easily allocate a part of their votes to these new minority parties, it becomes very easy for them to secure their control over the minority seats. It was reported to the EOM that especially on Special Election Day many votes had been casted for these 'shadow' minority parties, especially Assyrian, by individuals that are not from this community, leading to widespread suspicions among minority communities that this type of voting was ordered from higher up.

Irregularities seemed to take place with IDP's trying to cast their vote on Special Election Day. The EOM had the opportunity to speak to one Assyrian family from Baghdad with official IDP status. When presenting themselves at the designated polling station on the 28th of April, they were informed that they should come back and vote on the 30th of April, since their names could not be found on the list. When the family returned two days later, the polling center was closed. They tried four polling centers in the neighborhood, but could not encounter a polling station where they were registered.

Another complaint reached the EOM after the conclusion of the mission. On the tabulation forms from several polling stations, a high number of votes was put as the total result for a minority party, in this case Schlamaa, while in reality they did not receive a single vote. Four of these cases were conveyed to the EOM, leading up to a total of 1299 votes for Schlamaa while in reality they had none. Considering the gross discrepancy and the clear attempt to fraud, this information is particularly worrisome.

The images of the forged tabulation can be found below:

This is a forged tabulation form for ID 50193701. It features a header with the ID number and a barcode. Below the header is a grid of data points, likely representing election results or administrative records. The form includes various fields for names, dates, and numerical values. At the bottom, there is a signature line and a date field.

This is a forged tabulation form for ID 50079101. It follows the same layout as the first form, with a header, a grid of data, and a signature line at the bottom. The ID number and barcode are clearly visible.

This is a forged tabulation form for ID 50342101. It contains a header with the ID number and a barcode, followed by a grid of data and a signature line. The form is presented as a scanned document.

This is a forged tabulation form for ID 50190301. It includes a header with the ID number and a barcode, a grid of data, and a signature line at the bottom. The form is presented as a scanned document.

Media Coverage and Reports of Irregularities

Iraqi elections attracted significant attention on domestic and international media prior to and after the elections due to shared interests and democratic expectations. The security concerns which were expected to be the guiding factor shaping electoral behavior of people were focused upon before the elections, besides the lack of transparency issues and perceptions of corruption.

BBC reported on the day of the elections that although there was heavy security presence, more than 50 attacks were reported, on polling stations, also on people who were on their way to reach the polls in Northern and Western Iraq. Nikolay Mladenov, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's Special Representative for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) stated that 60% came out to participate in elections by voting despite the ongoing violence and unrest in the country. Al Jazeera marked that tensions occurred mostly in the Arab Sunni areas, where participation did not exceed 30-40%.

It was announced by IHEC on 4th June 2014 that in total, 893 appeals were received on the Iraqi Council of Representatives elections and 28 for the Governorate Council Elections in Kurdistan region until the end of the period that was determined for submission of appeals. *Ishtar TV* published a copy of one of the complaints received by IHEC on their website, issued by National Council of Chaldean Assyrian Syriac, after reviewing the results of some polling centers in Soran, under Erbil Province. It was claimed and shown in this complaint letter that that has been a manipulation in votes by adding 1029 extra votes to the Shlama election list. Ayad Allawi, the leader of Al-Iraqiya coalition, has claimed that two million ballot papers disappeared, as evidence to electoral fraud taking place.

According to the announcements of IHEC, on the Election Day a person was arrested for carrying 45 voter ID cards. Additionally, the electronic devices to check the ID cards were reported as not functioning well, although they were aimed to be used to prevent fraud. Regarding the ID cards, there was another complaint of irregularity in Iraq about the votes of the security forces. Since security forces voted on a Special Election Day, before the General Election Day on 30 April 2014, it was argued that members of the police and army received two voter cards, one as a member of the security forces member and one as a citizen, allowing them to vote for two times. Due to the increasing rumors about corruptions, IHEC took an unusual step to publish the data for the special vote of Iraqi security forces.

IHEC declared the provisional results on 19th May 2014 which were covered immediately on media however, it was stated that the appeals should be adjudicated by the Electoral Judiciary Panel first, before the final and binding results are certified.

Recommendations to IHEC

Based on its observations, the EOM wishes to make the following recommendations to the IHEC:

1. To ensure all campaign materials are removed from the vicinity of the polling centers on election day;
2. To remove all unauthorized individuals in and near the polling centers on election day, to ensure that people are able to cast their vote in a neutral environment and do not feel intimidated;
3. To improve the functioning of the electronic card reader;
4. To ensure the identity of the accompanying person is verified in case of family voting and assistance, thus not only contributing to the increase of secret voting but also creating an atmosphere in which individuals can assert their rights and request from their family members to respect their right to vote by themselves;
5. To pay particular attention to the voting rights of IDP's and minority components, notably the Assyrians, and resolve the complaints that were submitted by individuals from these communities;
6. To ensure the accreditation of international observers takes place in a more efficient and professional way, and to provide them with more comprehensive information on the elections and the electoral law.

Recommendations to the Government of the Republic of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government

Based on its observations and the reports received by Iraqi citizens, the EOM wishes to make the following recommendations to the government of the Republic of Iraq, and to the Kurdistan Regional Government:

1. To ensure full and adequate investigation into all reports of fraud. Considering minority components are vulnerable in Iraq's political landscape, it is of utmost importance to thoroughly investigate these reports in order to increase confidence in the electoral process among the different communities
2. In light of the above, to discuss alternatives to the quota system and voting procedures for minority components, considering that the current system does not result in political parties and representation adequately reflecting the minority communities' interests;
3. To ensure that international observers from minority rights organizations, such as the Assyrians, are able to receive approval from the KRG Ministry of Foreign Affairs to observe the elections.

Annex 1: Final Results Of The Council of Representatives Election

Initial election results as announced by Independent High Electoral Commission during a press release on 19 May 2014.

Political party	Total Seats
State of Law Alliance (SLA)-Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki	92
Sadrists-led by Moqtada al-Sadr	34
Mowatin (Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq [ISCI])-led by Ammar al-Hakim	31
Mutahidun	28
Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)- led by Iraqi Kurdistan President Masoud Barzani	25
Wataniyya (Former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi's group)	21
Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)- led by Iraqi President Jalal Talabani	21
Arabiyya Alliance led by DPM Saleh al-Mutlaq	10
Gorran (Movement for Change)	9
Islamic Virtue Party	6
National Reform Trend	6
Nineveh Kurdish Alliance	6
Divala is Our Identity	5
Iraq Alliance	5
Kurdistan Islamic Union	4
Kurdistan Islamic Group	3
Nineveh National Alliance	3
Civil Democratic Alliance	3
Loyalty to Al-Anbar	3
Iraqi Turkmen Front	2
Iraqi Loyalty Alliance	2
Kurdish Peace List	2
Competences and People Gathering	2
Unity of the Iraqis	2
Kurdish Peace List	2
Assyrian Democratic Movement	2
Assyrian Chaldean Popular Council	2
Others (with one seat)	14
Total seats of women	83
Total	328

Annex 2: Final Results Of The Governorate Council Elections (KRG)

As announced by Independent High Electoral Commission on their official website (retrieved on 06 June 2014)

Dohuk Province

Total count of votes: 500161 Total seats: 28 Total seats of women: 9

Political party	Total votes	Total seats	Women Seats
Kurdistan Democratic Party	357392	19	6
Kurdistan Islamic Union	62162	3	1
Patriotic Union of Kurdistan	40796	?????	1
Gorran (Movement for Change)	22855	1	1
Mesopotamia List	4086	1	-
National Board of Caldo, Syrianic Assyrian	3202	1	
Ishkhan Malkon Sarkisian	964	1	-

Erbil Province

Total count of votes: 754234 Total Seats: 30 Total seats of women: 9

Political party	Total votes	Total seats	Women Seats
Kurdistan Democratic Party	372607	12	4
Patriotic Union of Kurdistan	168603	6	2
Gorran (Movement for Change)	108117	4	2
Kurdistan Islamic Group	57907	2	1
Kurdistan Islamic Union	27713	1	-
Iraqi Turkeman Front	1904	1	-
Erbil Turkeman List	1770	1	-
Democratic Turkeman List	1125	1	-
National Board of Caldo, Syrianic Assyrian	1632	1	-
Shlama Entity	1198	1	-

Suleimanieh Province

Total count of votes: 906643 Total seats: 32 Total seats of women: 10

Political party	Total votes	Total seats	Women Seats
Gorran (Movement for Change)	359600	12	4
Patriotic Union of Kurdistan	318723	11	3
Kurdistan Democratic Party	86652	3	1
Kurdistan Islamic Union	66097	2	1
Kurdistan Islamic Group	55475	2	1
Kurdistan Alliance	10512	1	-
Mesopotamia List	255	1	-

IDP from Baghdad (Dohuk)



Annex 3: About UNPO and ACE

The Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) is an international, nonviolent, and democratic membership organization. Its members are indigenous peoples, minorities, and unrecognized or occupied territories who have joined together to protect and promote their human and cultural rights, to preserve their environments, and to find nonviolent solutions to conflicts which affect them.

Although the aspirations of UNPO Members differ greatly, they are all united by one shared condition that they are not adequately represented at major international fora, such as the United Nations and European Institutions. As a consequence, their opportunity to participate on the international stage is significantly limited, as is their ability to access and draw upon the support of the global bodies mandated to defend their rights, protect their environments, and mitigate the effects of conflict. In today's world where over 90 per cent of conflicts are intrastate, UNPO has been established to fill this gap, providing an international forum through which its Members can become effective participants and contributors to the international community.

UNPO's activities have two main goals, raising awareness of members internationally and allowing UNPO members to participate in international dialogue. UNPO's office in Brussels facilitates lobbying to European Union institutions for its Members, offering support as a liaison by establishing ties with major political groups in the European Parliament and at the European Commission. The purpose is to provide UNPO Members with tools and knowledge to effectively engage in high level lobbying and provide first-hand information and witness reports to key policy makers.

The Assyria Council of Europe (ACE) is an independent body with the aim of raising awareness in the EU of the plight of the Assyrian people living on their ancestral lands in Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Iran, an area known as historic Assyria. The European Union, with its increasingly important role in the Middle East is in a good position to contribute to the maintenance of the native Assyrian communities in the Middle East.

The Assyria Council of Europe is the voice of the Assyrian Diaspora communities in the different EU countries. The organization is supported by various Assyrian institutions and individuals in Europe and represents thus the general ambitions of the European Assyrians.

Annex 4: Delegate Profiles

Ms Maud Vanwalleghem, *Mission Leader, UNPO Brussels (Belgium)*

Ms Vanwalleghem studied History, with a minor in Art History, at the University of Ghent, graduating with both Bachelors and Masters degrees. After graduating, Ms Vanwalleghem moved to Madrid to study for a Masters in Contemporary Arabic and Islamic Studies at the Autonomous University of Madrid. She briefly worked in Belgium at the Chamber of Representatives of the Federal Government, reporting on plenary sessions within the parliament. In early 2012 Ms Vanwalleghem joined the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO), firstly as an intern before being appointed to the position of Program Manager for UNPO's busy Advocacy Office in Brussels. Her work at UNPO has involved advocacy work at the European Institutions, United Nations and U.S. Congress, in support of indigenous peoples, minorities, and unrecognised or occupied territories that the organisation represents. This has involved missions of various kinds to Iraq, Washington, Azerbaijan, Russia, Rwanda, Dubai and others.

Ms Matthea Vrij, *EOM Delegate, Evangelical Broadcasting (The Netherlands)*

Matthea Vrij holds a Master's Degree in History (International Relations) from the University of Utrecht. She entered the field of journalism in 1998 and has been travelling to North Iraq as a journalist for Dutch Public Radio since 2006. She has been reporting from there and from the wider region of the Middle East on issues such as post-dictatorship democracy, religious freedom, and minority emancipation.

Kenan Van De Mieroop, *EOM Delegate, Gent University (Belgium)*

Kenan Van De Mieroop is a doctoral researcher at the University of Ghent in Belgium. His research focuses on the current politics of the past in multicultural societies around the world and analyses political solutions to historical conflicts (for example transitional justice, reparations and state apologies). In particular he focuses on topics such as "historical reconciliation" after violent conflict, financial compensation for historical injustices and the role of historians and academic historiography in contemporary political and judicial settings. He teaches courses on Theoretical History and African American History. Kenan Van De Mieroop holds both Bachelor and Master's Degrees in Political Science and History from the University of Edinburgh, and a Master's Degree in History from the University of Ghent.





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