

Iraqi Turkmen Front



PRESS RELEASE ON THE IRAQI NATIONAL ELECTIONS

Iraqi Turkmen Front (ITF) issued an official protest to the High Commission for the Elections in Iraq on 31st January 2005 complaining about widespread irregularities committed by the Kurds in the Turkmen region.

To the High Commission for the Elections in Iraq
C/O The Kerkuk Bureau of the High Commission for the Elections in Iraq.

Ref: Contestation of irregularities during the voting process.

According to the legal rights that were granted to the political parties and organizations in order to contest any irregularity during the election process of 30th January 2005 which began in the morning and ended by closing the voting centers at 5 p.m, and in accordance with our conviction and belief that these elections must be clean and fair in order to establish a true democracy in Iraq, we are sorry and deeply concerned to inform you that too many irregularities have been committed during these elections which no doubt will affect its results.

Despite your declarations to the the press and to the television news networks that the elections have been `almost' clean and fair, we have encountered numerous problems to vote, have observed multiple irregularities in voting centers and have been subjected to illegal behaviour and unfair treatments in polling centers in our region, in the provinces of Kerkuk, Mosul, Salahaddin and Erbil.

These voting problems, voting irregularities, illegal behaviour from election officials, and unfair treatment of Turkmen voters in voting centers are intolerable and are contrary to the rules and regulations issued by your Commission, they are also against the basic laws of the country and must be denounced and the perpetrators must be condemned.

We present to you hereunder, a series of irregularities and illegal acts which we have observed and witnessed. They are clearly contrary to the election laws that you have issued and based on them. We contest the results of these elections and convinced that they have been hugely flawed.

Legal reasons for contesting the results of these elections:-

A – Irregularities concerning the eligible electors for voting and frauds of votes

1 – Illegal electorate registration and voting.

A huge number of Kurds from the provinces of Erbil and Sulaymaniyah have been brought to Kerkuk, at the initiative and under the supervision of the local branch of the "PUK" the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan party, where they have been given accommodation in the schools of Rahim Awa district and in numerous private Kurdish family homes in this district.

All these people have been allowed to register and vote in Kerkuk where they are irregulars and have no right to vote.

2 - Multiple vote casting by numerous voters.

A great number of voters in Rahim Awa district have voted more than once, some have voted at least five times without inking their fingers at all. These irregularities have been committed in the open and under the eyes of election supervisors and assessors of the district.

3 - Allowing youths under 18 years of age to vote.

A considerable number of youths under 18 years of age have been accepted to register in electors' lists and admitted to vote in Rahim Awa district at the initiative of the district's Kurdish political leaders with the complicity of election supervisors and assessors in contradiction with the election rules and laws.

This kind of illegal and irregular voting took place in the election center at Majouli school situated behind the old Al Karama security building and at the Arafa election center.

4 - Allowing votes of dead people !!!

A number of relatives of deceased people have been allowed to cast votes in the name of their relatives who died more than one year ago.

This kind of illegal and irregular voting took place in the election center at Assiri school situated behind the Andalus police station of Rahim Awa district where a voter called Mr. Hussain Saber voted on behalf of his father called Saber Abu Al Dajaj who passed away a long time ago!

5 - Allowing voting of some people in two different election centers.

About 2000 members of the National Guard of Kurdish origin have been allowed to vote twice, the first time at the election center close to their place of duty and the second time at the election center of their residency.

6 - Unequal and unfair treatment for Turkmen voters in Erbil.

Tens of thousands of Turkmen voters in Erbil province have been forbidden from using marker pens or ballpoint pens to cast their votes they were obliged to use lead pencils only.

It is easy to guess the reason behind such unacceptable restrictions! which were imposed to the Turkmen voters of this province in the absence of any international election observers or any other independent observers.

7 - Characterised frauds

In two villages namely Maftul Al Saghir and Maftul Al Kabir of Tuz Khurmatu region the inhabitants of which are all Arabs, none of them took part in these elections but it has been announced that the inhabitants of these two villages have voted 100% for list (130) which is the list of the Kurdish coalition! It is hard not to believe in miracles after such unbelievable performance!

8 - National Guards of Kurdish origin take control of election centers of Sulayman Bek town.

Sulayman Bek, a town in the Tuz Khurmatu region, where the inhabitants are Turkmen and Arabs.

The voting centers of this town have been infested by some Kurdish members of the National Guards, consequently it was found that the inhabitants of this town have voted for the Kurdish coalition list! This is another proof of manipulation of election results.

B – Election centers:-

1 - Eight new and improvised voting centres have been opened in Kerkuk on the day of the elections, 30th of January 2005.

National Guard members from Sulaymaniya province were brought to Kerkuk in order to guard these new and improvised voting centers. They have used their power and weapons to prevent Kerkuk police forces from approaching these improvised voting centers which were of course not listed in the official list of voting centers issued by the Election Commission in Kerkuk.

These new voting centres have been installed in the following

schools:-

a- Goran School

b- Alaa School

c- Imam Qasim Industrial School

d- Mamusta Rashad martyr School

e- Mahabad school

f- Imam Qasim school

g- Iskan school

h- 11th of April school

2 – Numerous election centers in the Turkmen region have been opened but there were no ballot papers, this has prevented a great number of Turkmen electors from voting, other voting centers have closed earlier, before 5 p.m the normal closing time, because of lack of ballot papers. The only explanation given for the lack of ballot papers was that they had been stolen from these centers by some political group's activists in order to prevent Turkmen voters from voting. This effectively has occurred in the election center installed in 'The 1st March' school in Atabagler district of Kerkuk.

3 – Modification of the location of some election centers in Turkmen districts in Kerkuk and their relocation to predominantly Kurdish districts one day only before the elections day!

As an example we mention the relocation of election center of the district of Al Wakeel Muhammed Ali Sadiq that was supposed to be installed in Marrakesh school in this district which has been moved to Assiri school located in a predominantly Kurdish area pretexting the over crowding in the original location.

4 – At Rahim Awa district which is a district with majority of Kurdish inhabitants, the election centers have opened at 6 am (one hour earlier than the official opening time) in order to allow voting in quiet for "The Irregular Inhabitants of Kerkuk", for those Kurds who have lately been brought to Kerkuk as 'supposedly original inhabitants' while they have never lived in this city.

5 - Two ballot boxes belonging to the election center located at Abi Tammam school have been stolen, most probably by members of the National Guards.

6 – Intrusion of groups of people affiliated with some Kurdish associations and organizations to several election centers in order to disturb voting process and intimidate Turkmen voters.

We can mention as an example the name of one of these Kurdish associations known as "Koma Lei 63 Kerkuk" who's members have participated in the intrusions and acted in the manner mentioned above.

7 – Manipulations of votes counting in the election center of Arafa by some groups as mentioned in detail in the attached report.

8 – In Telafer city with a population of 400.000 inhabitants predominantly Turkmen, only two election centers have been opened!

The insufficient and inadequate number of election centers opened in this city has prevented a great number of Turkmen electors from voting because of the long distance to walk between the election centers and their homes and because of the military operations and the bombing of the city that particular day which discouraged and prevented many of its inhabitants from going out for voting.

9 – In the towns of Iyadhiya and Muhallabiyya and the villages surrounding them which are situated in the Telafer region, at least 20.000 Turkmen inhabitants of these towns and villages could not vote because of the absence of ballot boxes in these towns and

villages.

It is very strange that not a single ballot box has been allocated or provided to these towns and villages.

10 – More than 3000 Turkmen electors in the town of Mansuriya have been prevented from voting because of theft of the balloting box of its election center by unknown thieves.

11 – In the Turkmen village of Bir Ahmed, the polling center has opened at 10 am (two hours later than the official opening time) and was closed earlier at 3.30 pm by the Kurdish Militia who took the balloting boxes with them to a secret location pretending that American forces wanted the boxes.

These balloting boxes were only returned to the Election Commission the next day!

12 – Voting in Kurdish regions in Kerkuk province and in Tuz Khurmatu continued for hours after 5 pm the official closing time. Observers from non Kurdish parties who objected to these irregularities have been badly treated and insulted by the members of the National Guards, and have been kicked out of the election centers under machine gun threats.

C – Elections employees and observers

1 – The unfair selection and hiring of the employees and observers for these elections was very clear and very noticeable, few Turkmen were selected or have been hired for this election of utmost importance and those who were selected as

election employees and observers have been forced out of the election centers before the official closing time and before the closing and sealing of the ballot boxes.

2 – Collision of the election employees and observers in most election centers located in the Kurdish region with some political parties which resulted in frauds and irregularities that could be resumed as follows:-

a – In the Rahim Awa election centers, the election employees have opposed voters and prevented them from voting for other than Kurdish lists, pretending that the law forbids Kurds from voting for a non Kurdish list!

b – Election employees in several election centers in the Kurdish region have given more than one balloting paper for each Kurdish voter as this was witnessed and noted by some election observers in these centers.

c - Election employees in several election centers in Kurdish region have accepted balloting papers that were not the official ones which were distributed to all voters listed in the food rationing lists which were established by the former regime during UN economic sanctions. In fact, they accepted the use of any piece of paper as balloting paper which they validated by simply putting an stamp on them.

As an example for this particular type of election irregularity, we mention the Wasiti election center where such irregular balloting papers have been used extensively.

d – Irregularities of un-observance of rules and regulations issued specifically for this elections.

Despite the total ban which has been declared and imposed by the security authorities to all private cars and other vehicles circulation in Iraq the day of the elections, we have witnessed a great number of private cars and other vehicles forming long columns, exhibiting Kurdish flags, and people using them shouting provocative propaganda slogans circulating in Rahim Awa district, without any objection or intervention from the police forces or from the National Guards!

E – Irregularities concerning the ban to circulate between towns and localities the day of the elections.

Despite the ban declared by the Iraqi authorities on circulation between towns and localities in Iraq on the election day and the daybefore it, we have witnessed and seen that this ban was not in

application in Kerkuk province where the road between Kerkuk and Erbil as well as the road between Kerkuk and Sulaymaniya have been kept open, which allowed tens of thousands of Kurds to circulate freely and come to Kerkuk without any restrictions or problems, which facilitated their participation to voting in Kerkuk then their returning to their own provinces to vote there one more time!

All these irregularities and law infringements have been organized at the initiative and under the supervision of General Sherko Shakir, the police chief in Kerkuk, and of General Anwar, the Commander of National Guards in this province who are both Kurds.

F - Irregularities in the distribution of badges to election officials and their vehicles. It has been decided to distribute 150 badges as well as circulation permits for the

vehicles of officials from Election Commission and to elections observers exclusively; unfortunately, most of these badges and permits have been distributed to the wrong individuals who had no official role to play during these elections. These individuals have abusively used these badges to interfere and to intervene in several election centers that they infested irregularly.

We can report from Mr Ibrahim the director of the Election Commission in Kerkuk, who declared that only 50 badges have been handed over to him by Mr Ismail Al Hadidi the Deputy Governor of Kerkuk, and most of the badges and circulation permits have been given to individuals circulating in vehicles belonging to the security department of Sulaymaniya province (known as ASAYISH).

G – Irregularities committed by some members from the police and the National Guards in Kerkuk.

Members from the National Guards of Kurdish origin have intervened in the election process by preventing the Turkmen electors of Laylan town to reach their election centers and vote, contributing to election process failure instead of contributing to its success by accomplishing their duty with professionalism and fairness.

We are terribly disappointed with the behaviour of the National Guards and with that of some members of the police force in Kerkuk who acted in an irresponsible manner during the elections in our region. They have created problems for Turkmen electors instead of solving them during the day of the elections.

H – Irregularities committed by the Kurdish militias "Peshmerga" disguised as National Guards, acting in their name and using their authority. In the mainly Turkmen towns of Yengija and Bastamli, Kurdish militia members wearing National Guards uniforms arrived at the election centers of these two towns after the end of the voting period and pretended that they were sent by the American occupation forces to collect the ballot boxes which were wanted by the Americans.

They have confiscated all ballot boxes in a hurry and took them to an unknown location following the instructions supposedly given to them by the Americans.

There were 18 ballot boxes in Yengija town alone and while they were in a hurry and rush to take them away, they dropped one of these boxes in the street where it broke open and all its ballot papers were dispersed in the street which they abandoned without any remorse or regret!

These boxes finally were brought back to the Election Commission after many hours during which it is legitimate to think that they have manipulated the ballot papers for their own advantage, frauding elections ballots and affecting its results in these two mainly Turkmen towns.

I – Irregularities and last minute nomination of some individuals as officials for the elections An officer of the security department of Sulaymaniya known as " Kak

TARIQ" has been appointed as deputy director of the Election Commission at Tuz Khurmatu the day of the election.

J – Irregularities, physical assault and aggression against election officials, illegal segregation, manipulation of ballot papers, confiscation of ballot boxes etc....!

Mr Mumtaz AHMAD the director of the election center of Ibn Khaldoon has been

attacked by members from the so-called "Asayish", the security department forces of the Iraqi Kurdistan. He has also been arrested and segregated in a room in his election center. His attackers have stolen the ballot boxes of his election center, taking them to an unknown location, keeping them all the night that followed the election day and bringing them back the next morning with one ballot box missing and the ballot papers of others surely manipulated and modified without the shadow of a doubt!

Iraqi Turkmen Front
Headquarters
Kerkuk