



Public Accessibility to DEC Offices

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42 out of 61 Observed DEC Offices without Security Guards

Introduction

This report highlights issues relating to security and public accessibility to District Election Commissioner (DEC) offices as observed by District Long-Term Observers (DLTOs) of the Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) in 61 districts between February 27 and March 10, 2013. It identifies potential public accessibility issues in 15 of the 61 observed DEC offices and a need for enhanced security measures in 42 offices.

The data has been compiled based on DLTO reports from 22 districts in Sindh, 22 in Punjab, nine in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), seven in Balochistan and one Agency in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), summarized in the table below:

Observation of DEC Offices		
Province/Region	No. of Reporting Districts	Reporting Districts
Sindh	22	Dadu, Ghotki, Jacobabad, Kamber Shahdadt, Karachi Central, Karachi East, Karachi South, Karachi West, Khairpur, Malir, Matiari, Mirpurkhas, Naushero Feroz, Tando Allahyar, Tando Muhammad Khan, Tharparkar, Thatta, Sanghar, Shaheed Benazirabad, Shikarpur, Sukkur, Umerkot
Punjab	22	Bahawalnagar, Bahawalpur, Bhakkar, Gujranwala, Hafizabad, Jhang, Jhelum, Kasur, Khushab, Lahore, Layyah, Mandi Bahauddin, Mianwali, Nankana Sahib, Narowal, Rahim Yar Khan, Rajanpur, Rawalpindi, Sahiwal, Sargodha, Sialkot, Vehari
KP	9	Bannu, Charsadda, Chitral, Hangu, Karak, Lakki Marwat, Mardan, Tor Ghar, Swat
Balochistan	7	Kalat, Kech, Khuzdar, Lasbela, Mastung, Panjgur, Washuk
FATA	1	South Waziristan Agency
Total	61	

DEC Offices with Restricted Access

Out of 61 observed DEC offices, 46 (75%) were located in public places with no security barricades. The remaining 15 offices (25%), however, were not easily accessible due to the presence of security barricades and/or distant locations.

FAFEN observers reported that 12 DEC offices were located beyond police barricades. These offices were located in Rawalpindi and Kasur in Punjab; Dadu, Malir, Karachi Central, Karachi South and Karachi West in Sindh; Bannu, Charsadda and Mardan in KP; Lasbela in Balochistan and South Waziristan Agency in FATA.

In Bannu, Malir, Karachi South and Karachi Central, people had to pass through an additional barricade put up by Rangers/paramilitary forces to reach the DEC office. Meanwhile, the DEC offices in Mardan and Rawalpindi were found to be located beyond additional barricades put up by the Army and/or unidentified people (persons not wearing identifiable uniforms), making them difficult for people to visit.

In Panjgur, FAFEN observers reported that the DEC office is located beyond barricades put up by Rangers/paramilitary forces, while the office in Swat was located beyond Army barricades. In addition, the observer in Thatta reported that the DEC office was in a far-off area, making public access difficult. The following table summarizes FAFEN's observation of relatively inaccessible DEC offices:

DEC Offices with Restricted Access Due to Security Barricades or Distant Location		
	District	Province/Region
Security Barricades	Panjgur	Balochistan
	Lasbela	
	South Waziristan	
	Bannu	FATA
	Charsadda	
	Mardan	
	Swat	
	Kasur	KP
	Rawalpindi	
	Dadu	
	Malir	Punjab
	Karachi Central	
	Karachi South	
	Karachi West	
	Distant Location	Thatta

DEC Offices without Security Guards

Out of the 61 observed DEC offices, 42 (69%) had no security guards. Most of these (20) were located in Punjab, followed by 14 in Sindh, seven in KP and one in Balochistan.

The absence of guards could cause security problems or dissuade citizens from visiting the DEC offices. In addition, it could also prompt unauthorized people (people not wearing identifiable uniforms) to establish security barriers outside the DEC office entrances to restrict access to the people. The following table details DEC offices without security guards:

DEC Offices without Security Guards		
Province	Number of Reporting Districts	Reporting Districts
Punjab	20	Bahawalnagar, Bahawalpur, Bhakkar, Gujranwala, Hafizabad, Jhelum, Kasur, Khushab, Lahore, Layyah, Mandi Bahauddin, Mianwali Nankana Sahib, Narowal, Rahim Yar Khan, Rajanpur, Rawalpindi, Sahiwal, Sargodha, Vehari
Sindh	14	Dadu, Ghotki, Jacobabad, Kamber Shahdadkot, Khairpur, Matiari, Mirpurkhas, Sanghar, Shaheed

		Benazirabad, Shikarpur, Sukkur, Tando Allahyar, Tharparkar, Umerkot
KP	7	Bannu, Chitral, Hangu, Karak, Lakki Marwat, Tor Ghar, Swat
Balochistan	1	Khuzdar
Total	42	

Recommendations

FAFEN recommends that ECP and DECs:

1. Coordinate with local administration to dismantle security barricades established by unidentified groups or individuals.
2. Ensure that all DEC offices have official security guards and an appropriate level of security measures to enable public accessibility while ensuring safety.

About FAFEN

The Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN), established in 2006, is a coalition of 42 leading civil society organizations working to strengthen all forms of democratic accountabilities in Pakistan. Governed by the Trust for Democratic Education and Accountability (TDEA), FAFEN also implements robust programs in-between elections related to monitoring parliamentary affairs, connecting constituents to their elected representatives, monitoring the performance of public and elected institutions and advocating electoral and democratic reforms.

FAFEN Election Program

FAFEN is implementing a long-term election observation program nationwide, including both pre and post-electoral processes. FAFEN is deploying 130 District Long-Term Observers (DLTOs) across the country to observe all phases of elections. FAFEN's Constituency Long-Term Observers (CLTOs) will observe the political campaigns in all National Assembly constituencies during the two months prior to Election Day. In addition, FAFEN will deploy more than 43,000 trained, non-partisan citizens to observe polling stations across the country on Election Day. All FAFEN observers adhere to the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) Code of Conduct for National Observers as well as the Global Principles for Non-Partisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organizations (April 2012). FAFEN's 10-month observation process, from February 1, 2013, will help keep all election stakeholders informed on issues relevant to fairness and transparency at every stage of the election process.

FAFEN Election Observation Methodology

FAFEN's election observation activities are based on the Constitution and laws of Pakistan, global best practice standards for elections, as well as the legal obligations of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), ratified by Pakistan in 2010. FAFEN LTOs use standardized checklists to report electronically to the FAFEN Election Observation Secretariat in Islamabad regularly. FAFEN compiles data and information from around the country to issue regular thematic updates for the consideration of voters and election stakeholders.

FAFEN LTOs observe and report on the activities of District Election Commissioner (DEC) offices, preparations of elections such as appointment and training of election officials, the process of candidate nominations, and compliance with the ECP's Code of Conduct for political parties and candidates (after the announcement of election schedule). In addition, LTOs observe and report on compliance of the executive branch with legal responsibilities and ECP regulations, including restrictions on transfers of civil service personnel and initiation of new development schemes. LTOs also monitor political and electoral intimidation and violence, the actions of the police and other security forces, and the overall political environment during the pre-election period.