



Public Accessibility and Security of DEC Offices

Pre-U10/7-March-2013

ECP Urged to Ensure Security and Access of DEC Offices

Introduction

This report highlights issues pertaining to public accessibility to District Election Commissioner (DEC) offices as observed by the District Long-Term Observers (DLTOs) of the Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN). The report identifies challenges related to security at DEC offices and public accessibility.

Eleven of the 62 DEC offices observed from February 18 to 26, 2013 had security barricades, which FAFEN recognizes could be important, but may also significantly hinder public access. On the other hand, official security guards are needed at 41 DEC offices to ensure security and access.

The data has been compiled from 26 districts in Punjab, 17 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), eight in Sindh, six in Balochistan and five in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). The details of FAFEN's observation of DEC offices are summarized in the table below:

Districts of FAFEN Observation of DEC Offices		
Province/Region	Number of Districts	Districts
Punjab	26	Bahawalnagar, Bahawalpur, Bhakkar, Chiniot, Gujranwala, Gujrat, Hafizabad, Jhang, Jhelum, Kasur, Khanewal, Khushab, Lahore, Layyah, Mandi Bahauddin, Mianwali, Narowal, Okara, Pakpattan, Rawalpindi, Sahiwal, Sargodha, Sheikhpura, Sialkot, Toba Tek Singh, Vehari
KP	17	Bannu, Battagram, Dera Ismail Khan, Hangu, Haripur, Karak, Kohat, Kohistan, Malakand, Mansehra, Mardan, Nowshera, Shangla, Swabi, Swat, Tank, Tor Ghar
Sindh	8	Kamber Shahdadt, Karachi Central, Khairpur, Malir, Mirpurkhas, Sanghar, Tando Allahyar, Tando Muhammad Khan
Balochistan	6	Lasbela, Khuzdar, Panjgur, Mastung, Kharan, Gwadar
FATA	5	Khyber Agency, Kurram Agency, North Waziristan Agency, Orakzai Agency, South Waziristan Agency
Total	62	

DEC Offices with Restricted Access

Out of the 62 DEC offices observed by FAFEN observers, 51 (82%) were located in public places with no security barricades. The remaining 11 (18%) offices, however, were not easily accessible because of excessive and/or unidentified security barricades or because of their distant location.

FAFEN observers noted that the DEC offices in Rawalpindi, Karachi Central and Khairpur were located beyond police barricades, making them difficult for people to visit. In Karachi Central, people had to go past an additional barricade put up by unidentified people (Persons not wearing identifiable uniforms) to reach the DEC office. The offices in Rawalpindi and Khairpur were located beyond additional barricades put up by Rangers/Paramilitary Forces/Frontier Constabulary (FC), Pakistan Army and unidentified people, making them extremely inaccessible.

Tribal areas also had DEC offices located beyond barricades erected by FC and unidentified people in Orakzai Agency, North Waziristan and South Waziristan.

In KP, FAFEN observers reported that the DEC offices in Bannu and Battagram are located beyond barricades set up by unidentified people. The DEC offices in Kohistan and Hangu are located in far-off areas, making them inaccessible for people. The following table summarizes FAFEN's observation of inaccessible DEC offices:

DEC Offices with Limited Accessibility Due to Security Barricades or Distant Location		
Accessibility Problem	Districts	Region
Security Barricades	Bahawalnagar	Punjab
	Rawalpindi	
	Karachi Central	Sindh
	Khairpur	
	Orakzai Agency	FATA
	North Waziristan	
	South Waziristan	
	Distant Location	Bannu
Battagram		
Hangu		
Kohistan		

DEC Offices without Security Guards

Out of the 62 DEC offices observed by FAFEN observers, 41 (66%) had no security guards. The absence of guards could cause security problems or dissuade citizens from visiting the DEC offices. On the other hand, the lack of official guards could prompt unauthorized people to establish security barriers or personnel outside the DEC office entrances and prevent access to the people.

Most of the offices without security guards were located in Punjab (22), followed by 13 in KP, four in Sindh and two in Balochistan. Security guards were present in all the DEC offices observed in FATA. The following table gives details of DEC offices without security guards:

DEC Offices without Security Guards		
Province	Number of Districts	Districts
Punjab	22	Bahawalnagar, Bahawalpur, Bhakkar, Chiniot, Gujranwala, Hafizabad, Jhelum, Kasur, Khanewal, Khushab, Lahore, Layyah, Mandi Bahauddin, Narowal, Okara, Pakpattan,

		Rawalpindi, Sahiwal, Sargodha, Sheikhpura, Toba Tek Singh, Vehari
KP	13	Bannu, Battagram, Dera Ismail Khan, Hangu, Haripur, Karak, Kohistan, Malakand, Mansehra, Nowshera, Swabi, Tank, Tor Ghar
Sindh	4	Kamber Shahdakt, Khairpur, Mirpurkhas, Sanghar
Balochistan	2	Khuzdar, Gwadar
Total	41	

Recommendations

FAFEN Recommends that the ECP and DEC's:

1. Coordinate with the 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 both adequate security and public accessibility.

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 monitor 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 monitor 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, that began on 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 monitor 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.