



ECP Urged to Improve Public Access to DEC Offices

Introduction

This report highlights issues relating to security and public accessibility of District Election Commissioner (DEC) offices observed by the District Long-Term Observers (DLTOs) of the Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) in 47 districts between March 11 and 20, 2013. It identifies potential public accessibility problems in eight of the 47 observed DEC offices and a need for enhanced security measures in 29 offices.

The data has been compiled based on DLTO reports from 23 districts in Punjab, 13 in Sindh, five in Balochistan, four in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), and two agencies in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), summarized in the table below:

Observation of DEC Offices		
Province/Region	No. of Reporting Districts	Reporting Districts
Punjab	23	Attock, Bahawalnagar, Bahawalpur, Bhakkar, Chiniot, Gujranwala, Hafizabad, Jhang, Jhelum, Kasur, Khanewal, Khushab, Lahore, Layyah, Lodhran, Mandi Bahauddin, Nankana Sahib, Okara, Pakpattan, Sahiwal, Sialkot, Toba Tek Singh, Vehari
Sindh	13	Ghotki, Jacobabad, Kamber Shahdadt, Karachi South, Karachi West, Khairpur, Malir, Matiari, Naushero Feroz, Sanghar, Shaheed Benazirabad, Sukkur, Umerkot
Balochistan	5	Kalat, Khuzdar, Lasbela, Mastung, Panjgur
KP	4	Battagram, Dera Ismail Khan, Mansehra, Tank
FATA	2	Orakzai Agency, South Waziristan Agency
Total	47	

DEC Offices with Restricted Access

Out of 47 observed DEC offices, 39 (83%) were located in public places with no security barricades. The remaining eight offices (11%), however, were not easily accessible due to the presence of security barricades and/or distant locations.

FAFEN observers reported six DEC offices being located beyond police barricades, making public access difficult. These offices were located in Khairpur, Malir and Karachi West (Sindh); Kasur (Punjab); Panjgur and Lasbela (Balochistan); and Orakzai Agency and South Waziristan Agency in tribal areas. FAFEN DLTOs had earlier recorded similar observations regarding the DEC offices in Kasur, Malir, Karachi West, South Waziristan Agency and Lasbela, suggesting that no action has been taken by the Election Commission of Pakistan to have these barricades removed. However, the DLTO in Karachi South, who had earlier reported that the

DEC office in the district was located beyond police barricades, observed during the current reporting period that the barricades had been removed.

In Malir, people had to pass through an additional barricade put up by Rangers/Frontier Constabulary/Paramilitary Forces to reach the DEC office, while the office in Khairpur was found to be located beyond additional barricades put up by the army and/or unidentified people (persons not wearing identifiable uniforms), making accessibility difficult for visitors. In addition, the DLTOs in Panjgur and Orakzai Agency reported that the DEC offices were located beyond barricades put up by Rangers/FC/Paramilitary Forces. The following table summarizes FAFEN's observation of inaccessible DEC offices:

DEC Offices with Restricted Access Due to Security Barricades or Distant Location		
Security Barricades	District	Province/Region
	Panjgur	Balochistan
	Lasbela	
	Orakzai Agency	FATA
	South Waziristan Agency	
	Kasur	Punjab
	Karachi West	
	Khairpur	Sindh
	Malir	

DEC Offices without Security Guards

Out of the 47 observed DEC offices, 29 (62%) had no official security guards. Most of these offices (16) were located in Punjab, followed by eight in Sindh, three in KP and two 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 offices 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	16	Attock, Bahawalnagar, Bahawalpur, Hafizabad, Jhelum, Kasur, Khanewal, Khushab, Layyah, Lodhran, Mandi Bahauddin, Nankana Sahib, Pakpattan, Sahiwal, Toba Tek Singh, Vehari
Sindh	8	Ghotki, Jacobabad, Kamber, Shahdadt, Khairpur, Matiari, Sanghar, Shaheed Benazirabad, Umerkot
KP	3	Battagram, Dera Ismail Khan, Tank
Balochistan	2	Kalat, Khuzdar
Total	29	

Recommendations

FAFEN recommends that ECP:

1. Coordinate with the local administration to have the security barricades established by unidentified groups or individuals removed.
2. Ensure that all DEC offices have official security guards and 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, that began from February 1, 2013, will help keep all election stakeholders informed on issues relevant to fairness and transparency.

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.