

**Democracy and Human Rights  
Program (DHRP)  
ELECTION - 2002**

**Election Monitoring Report**

**SOUTH ASIA PARTNERSHIP-  
PAKISTAN**

**ELECTION 2002:  
GENERALLY FAIR, EXCLUSIVELY UNFAIR**

**SUMMARY STATEMENT:**

Having carefully observed the acts of partiality, before and after the elections, by the government and serious procedural flaws on the polling day, we are compelled to say that, despite carefully created impression of peace and fairness, the elections were grossly flawed and deliberately rigged to create a parliament suitable for the political designs and institutional ambitions of the present military government.

## **BACKGROUND**

South Asia Partnership Pakistan and other civil society organizations, representing development NGOs, civil society forums, and public interests organizations have been working in the field of democracy, governance, peace, human rights and social justice for the last many years. All these programs have contributed in creating a critical mass of social activists, human rights and peace workers who are now playing their role with a varied level of success in the struggle for democratization of state and civil society.

Taking the lead from our previous experiences and considering the vitality of these issues in the current situation we have launched a program called '**Democracy and Human Rights Program (DHRP)**'. The program aims at initiating a comprehensive campaign at different levels for ensuring the democratic processes in Pakistan especially availing the opportunity of forthcoming general elections in October 2002, as promised by this Government. To initiate the debate of democracy three important areas have been identified: (i) media and journalists, (ii) political parties and candidates and (iii) minorities. Women and young people are main-streamed in all activities of this program.

The program implemented in all four provinces by engaging political parties, media associations, journalist's forums and minority groups besides establishing a dialogue with wide-range of civil society groups and networks on these important issues. The national core team of this program is:

- South Asia Partnership Pakistan (SAP-PK)
- Interactive Resource Centre(IRC)
- Inter press communication Karachi (IPC)
- Justice and Peace commission Multan (JPC)

Three provincial resource groups were also formed for the implementation of program activities in Sindh, Balochistan and NWFP provinces. These groups are:

- Takhleeq Foundation-Karachi
- Bhit Shah Declaration Coordination Council-Sindh (BDCC)
- Development Association of Youth-Quetta (DAY)
- Balochistan Coordination Council (BCC)
- Human Resources Management and Development Center-Peshawar (HRM&DC)

- Workers Education Research and Welfare society (WERWS)
- Sarhad Coordinating Councils-NWFP

### **MANDATE AND METHODOLOGY:**

Election monitoring was an integral part of the program. The need to monitor the elections generated from the bitter experiences of the people of Pakistan who saw many elections rigged and manipulated by the governments. It was realized that the constant decrease in the ratio of voter's turnout reflected the fact that the Masses were being disenchanted with the political process because they had constantly been deprived of their right to freely choose their representatives. Moreover, the fact that the elections were being held under a military government that wanted legal covers for its dominance over civilian institutions by bringing an obedient parliament made compulsory for civil society of Pakistan to observe the election and judge the entire process independent of the state organs.

For this purpose, **(150)** civil society activists from **(72)** districts from four provinces of Pakistan were given extensive training to monitor the elections. About **2000** CBOs were involved in the process which made it a widely organized act of political vigil by the people at grass roots level. The trained activists were told about rigging patterns in the history of Pakistan. A well thought out Performa was prepared which consisted of the questions that reflected general atmosphere and exclusive discrepancies on the polling day.

The trained activists were assigned to further train (10) people from their district and make a team to monitor **(30) polling stations (180 polling both)** in their district. Thus, the monitoring team swelled to **about 720 persons.**

### **WHAT DID WE OBSERVE?**

The questionnaire delivered to the observers was designed to judge the procedural flaws and exclusive observation of partiality on the polling day. Small questions about starting time of the polling, relevant material compulsory for the smooth process of polling, rules and regulations, secrecy of stamping ballot paper, influence and harassment, and the level of training of polling staff depicted the general preparedness of the staff and EC.

Some questions related to the code of conduct declared by the EC. Whether posters, banners and camps were seen inside the polling stations? Did political parties provide transportation or eatables to the voters? And did any political party harass or torture others etc.

Other questions related to the general atmosphere of the polling. The incidents of violence, theft of ballot boxes, firing or display of arms, partiality of police or army men, women participation, the role of polling staff to stop violations of the rules and finally the procedure after the end of the polling. Was counting process fair? Were the results pasted on the wall? Were all the polling agents present at the time of counting?

Most importantly, there was a section, in the questionnaire, where observer was asked to write his/her general feeling regarding any abnormal and extra ordinary event or happening.

### **THE CONCERNS EXPRESSED DURING TRAINING SESSION**

During training session, trainees cited many examples that necessitated the need to monitor the elections. Most of the participants were apprehensive of the acts by the local and provincial authorities that could be termed as “pre poll rigging”. They told the house about the postings and transfers being done to corner some particular political parties. Many trainees expressed their concerns regarding the acts, laws and strategies enacted and adopted by the authorities to favor a political faction and to discourage the parties belonging to the opposition. Likewise, the partiality of disqualification law and code of conduct and condition of graduation was pointed out. There was a consensus opinion that the government was using its resources, might and authority to strengthen its favorite parties and to weaken its opponents. In the light of these general observations, all the trainees enthusiastically vowed to monitor the upcoming elections.

### **PROCESS**

The main secretariat was established in the office of SAP-PK. Observers from 72 districts of Pakistan faxed their filled questionnaires while they had been explaining the situation by phone calls throughout the day. Computer operators continuously feed data to the formats exclusively designed for the election details. By next evening, almost all the reports had reached the SAP-PK office.

## THE ROLE OF ELECTION COMMISSION

According to our observers, the role of Election Commission (EC) generally seen as biased towards some political parties. It was a majority opinion that the dull election campaign, which was one of the main causes of low turnout, was result of the code of conduct declared by EC.

Numerous reports sent by our observers pointed out discrepancies that were caused by the structural changes in the administration purposefully done to influence the election results. EC noticed these irregularities but could not stop them.

A major failure of the EC was that it could not give sufficient training to the Polling staff due to which voters had to face many problems.

EC could not provide adequate security to the declared sensitive constituencies that resulted into the incidents of violence and loss of innocent lives.

EC could not ensure the participation of women voters in the backward areas that are known for stopping their women from exercising their right to vote.

It was highly appreciable on the part of EC that it extended complete help to the monitors. The staff of all offices of EC throughout the country had to work very hard to issue monitoring cards. Moreover, there was no resistance from polling staff. Our observers were welcomed and provided every help in monitoring the process of voting and counting.

## GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

### LOW TURNOUT

According to the reports sent by the observers, **the voter's turnout was dismally low**. Some observers termed it the lowest voter turnout in the history of Pakistan. People generally remained in their homes and decided not to cast their votes. Most of the districts observed by our teams reported an **average turnout of 20 to 25 percent** contrary to the claim of the government that the turnout was around 35 to 40 percent. **Especially women voters opted to stay at homes.**

The teams from Sindh province reported low turnout especially of women. They observed that the main cause of the low turnout was lack of awareness of the importance of voting. In many Sindh constituencies, candidates never tried to bring female voters. The turnout was observed particularly low in NWPF. In many parts of the

province, women were barred from casting their votes. For example, in Abbotabad, NA-18, the turnout was not more than 5% till 2:00 pm. Likewise, in Kurram Agency, NA-37-38, voters turnout was dismally low and main cause was that the voters especially women did not possess ID cards. In a Quetta constituency, PB-6, the polling stations were empty till 1:00 pm. In the big cities of Punjab, turnout was as low as other provinces. When asked by the observers, most of the people said that they never trusted in the polling exercise. **“It is a fake exercise since the government has selected the winning candidates,” was the common impression among people.**

### **UNTRAINED AND UNEQUIPPED POLLING STAFF**

The general observation of our monitors about the polling staff was that they were not properly trained which caused inconvenience for the voters. **The polling staff lacked proper information about the process and regulations of the voting.** In many polling stations, they were unable to provide guidance to the voters. Particularly, women and elders in the rural areas could not get proper guidance that resulted into the exploitation of their ignorance. For example, in some Hyderabad constituencies (NA-32, NA-46), polling was started after 12:30 pm. Toba Tek Singh was one of the worst victims of the inefficiencies of polling staff and there was no proper arrangement of security personals in many constituencies.

According to the reports, at many polling stations, polling agents of the influential parties successfully misguided voters and theft their votes for their favored candidates. For example, in a female polling booth of NA-130, one polling agent of government's favored party was misguiding and pressurizing ignorant rural women. In a Chaman constituency (Muzafargarh), a presiding officer was seen stamping and casting votes for the candidate of PML (Q) while the police never interfered. **In one polling station of NA-120 female staff had brought their spouses to help them in their work.**

There were numerous reports by our observers that polling staff lacked vital things needed for the electoral process, like ballot boxes, ballot papers, stamps, indelible ink etc. Sometimes copies lacked serial numbers and sometimes even electoral symbols were missing. These discrepancies caused delay in the start of the polling process. In most of the polling stations, observed by our monitors, the polling was started with the average delay of half an hour.

## **Flawed electoral lists and election schemes**

The majority of our observers reported **inconvenience to the voters caused by flawed electoral lists prepared by NADRA which discouraged people from exercising their right to franchise.** The observers saw voters, all over the country, going back to their homes without casting votes because they could not find their names in electoral lists. They were simply told to go and search their polling station somewhere else.

It was intriguing for those voters who had been casting votes in the particular polling stations. For example, a Rajanpur constituency, NA-174, went to their polling station NO. 216 only to know that their polling station had been changed. After search of almost three hours, they came to know that the presiding officer had established a polling station in his village, Basti Horra.

The condition of ID cards for casting vote was generally observed by the polling staff. But our observers cited many examples where polling staff was accepting other identities as well. **In a Lahore constituency, NA-119, our observer saw polling staff allowing the voters to cast votes on even service cards.**

Another big problem was caused by the seriously flawed polling schemes due the delimitation of constituencies. For example, **entire voters of village Mud Faqir Mohammad of Rajanpur had to search for their polling station for four hours before finding the polling station where they had their names enlisted.** Similar kinds of inconveniences were reported from most of the district monitored by our team. Even members of one family found their names in different polling stations usually many kilometers away from their house.

It was seen as a deliberate strategy of the government. The general impression among workers of political parties and voters was that the government wanted empty lists to be filled later on by the fake ID cards. There were rumors that the government has established “**ghost polling station**” in the selected constituencies.

## ACTS OF VIOLENCE

Our observers reported quite a few acts of violence and theft of ballot boxes. In some cases, violence resulted into death of the victims.

**Usually, police remained irrelevant.** For example, the companions of the Nazim of Multan union council no 47, resorted to heavy firing that severely injured three persons. In Sheikhupura, NA-137, PS-217, the activists of candidate resorted to heavy firing due to which polling had to stop for two hours. In Chandio Goth constituency of Hyderabad, two polling agents of PPPP were kidnapped. In a Sukker constituency, unknown individuals opened fire and ran away with 4 ballot boxes.

Polling was stopped while presiding officer was critically injured. Likewise, in NA-148, two persons were killed and three critically injured due to the armed clashes. Similar incidents were witnessed in NA-114, PP-125, PS-137, NA-132, NA-7, PF-17, NA-18, PF-46, NA-2, and PF-4.

Two persons were killed in Shah Faisal colony Karachi, due to the armed clashes between MQM (H) and MQM. In Nosheroferoze, the activists of PPP and NPP resorted to firing, killing two and injuring 12. In Kot Diji 12 injured due to firing between supporters of PPP and PML (F). In a similar kind of incident, the Hyderabad head office of MQM (A) was attacked by MQM (H). Both the parties resorted to heavy firing due to which voters could not go to the polling stations.

The majority of the observers reported that incidents of violence and firing were seen across the political divide. But the most intriguing factor was the irrelevance of the police and other law enforcing agencies. **Even the declared “sensitive constituencies” were not provided adequate security.**

## WOMEN PARTICIPATION

As usual, there were many incidents reported where women were not allowed to vote. Such incidents were primarily reported from different parts of NWFP, Balochistan and Punjab. In these constituencies, candidates and power brokers across the political divide decided to stop women from exercising their right to vote and **that depicted the failure of the government which had been claiming to bring women in the political mainstream of Pakistan.** Besides that, in many polling stations women staff was not present which barred women voters to go to the stations. For example, in a constituency of Mianwali, 12 ladies polling stations were without female staff, which resulted in approximately 6,262 women not casting their votes. Some of such incidents given in the report are mentioned below



In Sahiwal Chak 123/14, all the men across the political divide decided to stop their women from casting vote. Likewise, in a Pashin constituency (PB-10) all candidates from Pukhtun Khwah Milli Awami Party, Millat Party, JUI and PML (Q) decided that the women of their constituency will not cast votes. In a Khangarh constituency of Muzafargarh, a woman was severely beaten for not voting for a particular party favored by government PML (Q). In the tribal area (NA-45), the local Jirga decided to close down two polling stations, 86-87, fixed for the female voters. However, some contrary incidents were also cited. For example, Lilyani town in Sargodha, women were allowed to vote first time in the history of Pakistan. Likewise, the women of village Harripur were allowed to vote and it was their first experience. **According to the report, it was the strategic decision taken by a local MMA candidate since he wanted the female votes to win.**

### **SOME SPECIFIC OBSERVATIONS**

According to popular opinion and political observers, ex-federal minister Ms. Zubaida Jalal enjoyed the full support of local establishment. She was contesting elections against a very strong candidate, Dr. Mohammad Malik of BNM who enjoyed the popular support of local voters. A local influential, Mr. Ahsan Shah, reportedly after securing “deal” with NAB, was brought in Pakistan to contest election on provincial seat against Dr. Yasin of the above mentioned party. Mr. Ahsan Shah ran the electoral campaign of Ms. Zubaida Jalal. According to the reports filed by the monitors, entire local machinery was used by the government supported candidates (Zubaida and Ahsan)

According to the reports, local establishment suddenly started checking papers of vehicles, which is unusual in most areas of Balochistan. There were wide rumors that it was a part of the strategy to benefit Ms. Zubaida and Mr. Ahsan. Later on, that strategy backfired when security forces opened fire on the mob pelting stones on them agitating against the detention of their vehicles. As a result, two people were killed.

There was a strong rumor that government had issued 15,000 fake ID card to be used against BNM candidates. **Probably that is why, the people agitating against rigging, first of all, attacked local ID card office.** Interestingly, Dr. Yasin was declared winner but then during recounting, he was declared to be loser.

In PB-6, a constituency near Quetta, usually 3 to 4 candidates contest the polls and the winning ratio had always been around **6,500**. This time, **33 candidates** were contesting from this constituency that was reduced due to delimitation. Even then, the winner Mulla Abdul Rahim Bazai, secured **10,500** votes despite the fact that observers declared a very low ratio of turnout. Similarly, NA-262, which is the largest constituency of Pakistan, recorded highest voting ratio in 1993 when Mehmood Khan Achakzai secured 37,000 votes. This time Hafiz Hussain Ahmad secured about **40,000 votes**. On the contrary **the total votes secured by winners on four provincial seats were about 26,000.**

In NA-107 (Kharian) PML(Z) leader Ijaz-ul-Haq presented before press conference, a bag full of signed ballot papers casted for the candidate of his party which were later discovered from a garbage drum.

In NA-118, Lahore, Nazim Ravi Town came with the son of Mian Mohammad Azhar (president PML (Q) in the government vehicle (LOW-8666) and tried to influence and harass the polling staff.

In NA-86 (Chinyot), Qaiser Ahmad Sheikh of Tehreek-e-Istaqlal was declared winner. The news papers carried the news of his success. However, by next evening, **Mohammad Tahir Shah was declared winner whose nephew Zulifqar Ali Shah is Tehsil Nazim Chinyot.** According to an observer, the presiding officer of the polling station 123 signed for 10 ballot books but he found only 6 books when he opened the bag. **There were rumors that rigging was done in of "Ghost stations."**

In Bhakkar 2, NA-74, the record ratio of voting was seen in 1997 when Rashid Akbar Niwani secured 63000 votes. This time, turnout was declared 63%, winning candidate Ch. Shujaat, **who never belonged to this constituency**, secured 10,2000 votes and runner up secured 73000 votes.

According to the observers and local residents, the turnout in tehsil Nara of district Khairpur was not more than 20% but it was declared more than 70%.

A losing candidate Habib Jalib Baloch from NA-260, Quetta, held a press conference and showed the journalists the polling station wise results which counted 12000 votes. **But government had declared him loser with 22000 votes.**

In NA-130, observers visited a polling station located beyond BRB canal in Warra Mohlay Wassian, a remote village, where local armed influential individuals had taken hold of the two room polling station. They were openly pressurizing the electoral staff to accept votes on fake ID cards. The polling agents of other parties were helpless and harassed. The only police man that was present there was obeying their orders.

According to the initial result of NA-256, Muzaffargarh, Sardar Amjad Hammeed Khan Dasti of PML (Q) was losing. Then results of 20 polling stations were blocked and by next evening, he was declared winner. Similarly, from NA-250, the MMA candidate had won by 10000 votes from his opponent from PML (Q) who was nephew of Zilla Nazim. Next day, he was declared winner by 85 votes. In NA-178, a candidate Shahid Jamil Qureshi's had been given full support by his SSP brother.

### **The voting patterns of minorities:**

**The Ahmadia community boycotted the polls due to the separate electoral list and affidavit for the belief on “Khatam-e-Nabuwat” made for them.** As far as Christian and Hindu minorities were concerned, some interesting and encouraging signs were seen during and before the elections.

The majority of the minority voters and political workers actively participated in the elections. When asked by the observers, they said that they were honored and respected because every candidate of every party came to them and asked for their votes. They felt themselves as equal and respected citizens of Pakistan. For example, political parties never visited Shantinagar, a village which was attacked, burnt and looted by Muslim mob on Feb 6, 1997, was visited by all the candidates because of the fact that there were 6,000 minority votes.

A Christian district councilor from Muzaffar Garh, Joerge Mehboob, told the observers that even candidates from MMA tried their best to lure the Christian votes. Mr. Mohan Prakash, a Hindu district councilor from Hyderabad, said that the minorities were getting more respect and attention by mainstream population. While only PPPP, Awami Tehreek, PPP (SB), SDA and National Alliance gave general tickets to 12 minority candidates, only one Hindu candidate from PS-61 Tharparkar, Mr. Rajweer Singh won the seat.

The minority votes were divided in such a way that no single party could claim that it got largest share of minority votes. PPPP, PML(Q), PML(N), PPP (SB), NA, MQM, ANP, and SDA all got minority votes. In Lahore, Tahir ul Qadri of Awami Tehreek was won due to the large amount of minority votes. While in Peshawar and Mardan, many Christians voted for the MMA. **The Christian minority of Sargodha voted for PPPP while majority of minority voters in Faisalabad (about 80,000 minority votes), Gujranwala and Sheikhpura (about 82,000 minority votes) were cast votes for PML (Q).**

According to one information, Christians of Chak 5/4-L, district Muzaffargarh, voted for Qasim Hanjira from PML (Q) for national assembly and for provincial seat, they voted for Nasir Abbas Taragar of PML (N) while on this seat Mrs. Khaleda Mohsen from PPPP got only 70 Christian votes. From Chak 135/16-L (A Christian village of Khanewal), Christian voters favored Fakhar Zaman of PML (Q) While from Chak No. 133/16-L, PPPP candidate Pir Aslam Bodla got majority Christian votes. **The minority vote was generally divided in the rest of the country as well.**