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RASSED, an independent watchdog, Wednesday, announced its initial report on monitoring the local and decentralization elections, which took place yesterday across the Kingdom. In a press conference held today, RASSED presented photos and video clips that document local elections violations during the voting, and counting and sorting stages.

The report included benchmarking the procedures followed during the voting and counting and sorting processes against international standards governing the polling. Regarding the integrity of the elections, the comparison showed that the electoral process was marred by violations that had a serious negative impact on electoral integrity in few regions of the Kingdom. Analysis of field observers' data indicated there was no systematic approach by the Independent Election Commission (IEC) to manipulate the results of the municipal and decentralization elections.

The report also showed that poor management of the voting process was blamed for the majority of integrity violations. These included the poor distribution of voters to voting centers, especially in the Greater Amman Municipality, Greater Zarqa Municipality and Greater Irbid Municipality.

The scene at some gymnasiums dedicated for casting ballots, and counting and sorting votes was chaotic and saw serious violations by the voting and counting and sorting committees, voters, candidates representatives as well as candidates themselves. The influx of voters, which was disproportionate with the infrastructure, has limited the capacity of the elections watchdog to enforce the legal framework. RASSED observers have recorded a relatively large number of cases of election committees' non-compliance with legal voting mechanisms, such as de-listing voter names from the paper and electronic records, allowing voters to vote more than once, as well as violations of electoral secrecy and group voting. Other violations were also reported during the counting and sorting process at the voting centers. The process was chaotic, limiting the candidates' representatives ability to follow up closely on violations and submit timely objections.

As for the attack on polling stations and ballot boxes in the Muwaqqar area, east of Amman, RASSED welcomes the IEC decision to cancel the results of the elections and calls for re-elections in the near future, after documenting severe violations in 7 out of 12 polling stations. We, at RASSED, are waiting for the output of the

investigation to ensure the transparency of the polls. RASSED, however, believes that the violations were the results of poor planning by the watchdog and relevant stakeholders, since the area is well known of usual electoral tension.

The key issues related to electoral justice were the poor distribution of voters on polling stations and poor organization capabilities, as the case with other indicators. The effort and the time needed to cast ballots varied among the polling stations in the same constituency, casting negative impact on justice and reducing voter turnout in many areas with high electoral concentration.

In this regard, RASSED's statistical analysis team recorded a significance difference in the time required by voters to cast ballots. It ranged between 3 minutes in some stations and 150 minutes in nearby stations in the same constituency. This restricted certain demographic groups' ability to exercise their franchise, such as persons with special needs, women and the elderly.

These distortions had a serious impact on the outcome of the polls, giving advantage to candidates and blocs with bigger voter base and motivation, such as ideological political groups, where ideologized voters, globally, have greater motivation to vote, thus waiting for long periods, bearing scrambles and poor infrastructure at the voting centers and rooms. Average voters, meanwhile, have a lower motivation.

The report also covered voters' free will to cast ballot, where most violations witnessed by the observers centered on violating electoral secrecy and exploiting voters' economic hardships through vote buying. The field observers also recorded a large number of public voting, alleged illiteracy and group voting in most constituencies, and in gymnasiums in particular, which saw the largest number of breaches of the secrecy of the ballot. The statistical analysis team concluded that there was a positive relation between these violations and the number of voters registered at the polling station on the one hand, and their flow during the polling period, on the other.

As for neutrality of the elections management, the analysis team concluded that the electoral management body (EMB), i.e. the Independent Election Commission, carried out most of its mandate with complete neutrality. The team also concluded that most of the recorded imbalances were committed by members of the local elections and sorting committees as well as others.

RASSED observers recorded limited incidents of clear bias of the elections and sorting committees in favor of certain candidates. Some committees allowed representatives of certain candidates to be present at voting booths, while others were prevented, although, according to law, no one is allowed to be present near the booths, unless in exceptional cases where the voter is not capable to cast ballot alone. A few presidents and members of elections committees were spotted directing voters to vote for candidates whom the former support; either by directly asking the voter to vote for a certain candidate or a praising a candidate in front of the voters to influence their voting decision.

A number of observations and violations, which were documented at various polling stations and gymnasiums across the Kingdom were also presented during the press conference, including:

- A footage from Zarqa Governorate showing attempts to influence and direct voters during the voting process and violations of the secrecy of the ballot.
- A footage from the Princess Rahma hall showing congestion and how many voters were deprived of their right to vote.
- A footage from Yarmouk University Gymnasium showing huge congestion, increasing the time needed to cast ballot and causing confusion in the voting process.
- A footage showing the volume of group voting, and the presence of large numbers of voters behind the voting booths, influencing the voters' freedom and voting decision.
- A footage from Queen Zein Al Sharaf Hall showing that the single voter required more than two hours to cast ballot, due to the overcrowding in the hall.

The report concluded with a number of recommendations presented by RASSED to the IEC, including the need to review all the electoral violations and to hold accountable those with underperformance. RASSED also reiterated the importance of addressing this issue in a transparent manner, to realize an electoral process with minimum violations. The distribution of voters on the polling stations must be reconsidered and done according to clear and transparent principles and in line with the fairness of the electoral process. Further, the legal framework governing the local or municipal elections must be revisited, to ensure fair representation, give a bigger say to political parties and expand constituencies. Such legal amendment must address all procedural distortions that emerged during the organization of the polls, especially those related to the participation of women.



14 cases

of Polling committees used other type of identification than National ID cards to verify voters' identities

of Polling Committees cross-checked voters' names on both the paper and electronic lists



98.7%



2.3%

of polling stations witnessed a change of one or more members

of the polling stations had voters inside the premises even



20.9%

13 cases

of Polling Stations witnessed voting outside the voting booth



13.3%

of Polling Stations witnessed directing of voters towards certain candidates



18.5%

of Polling Stations witnessed a halt of the voting process



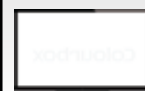
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Cases of the ballot papers were not displayed on the screen during votes counting



5.4%

of the counting screens in the polling centers were not working

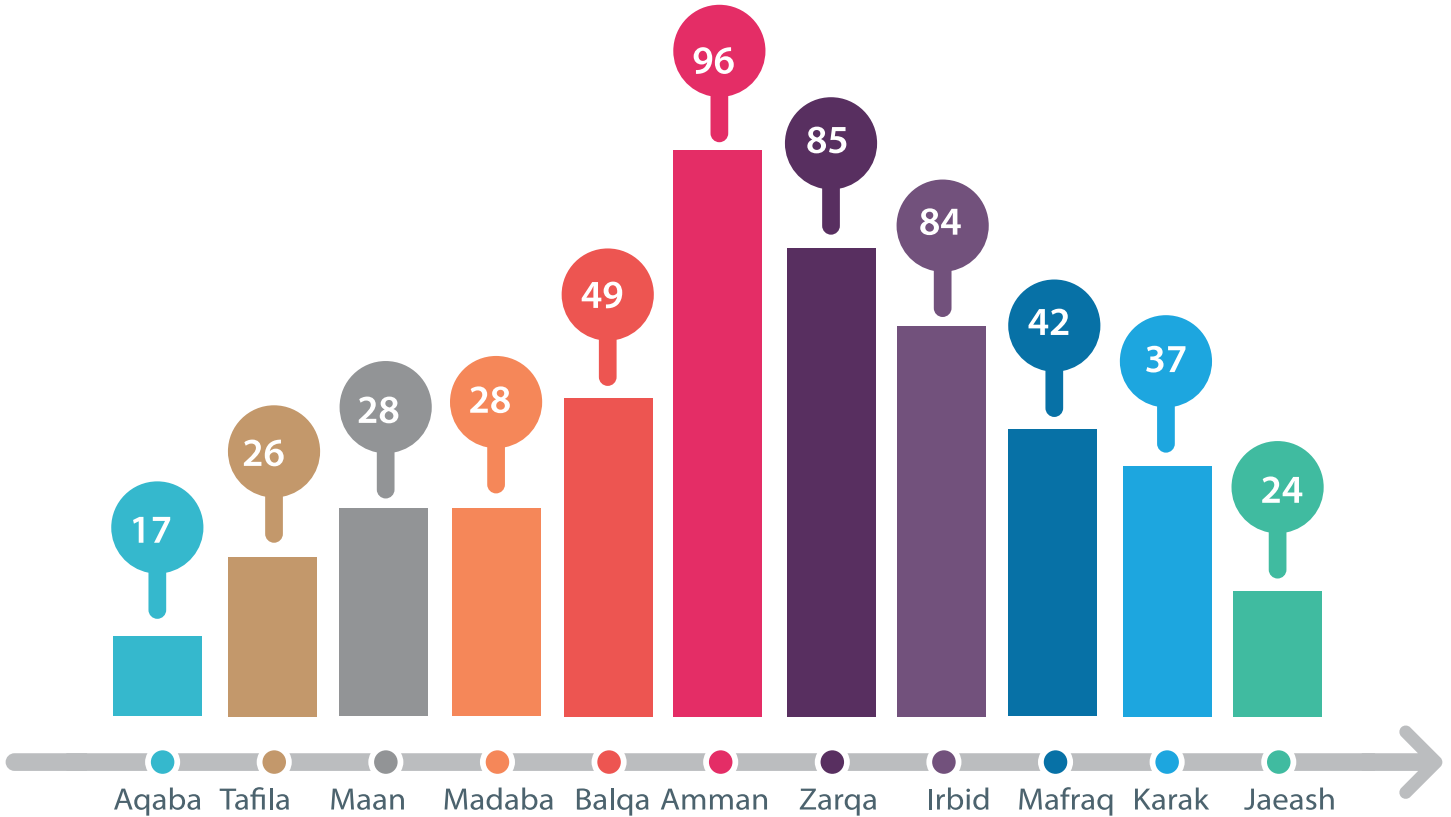


8.6%

of counting records were not displayed on the polling stations doors



Electoral Incidents and Violations



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