



RASSED Statement on Using Sports Halls as Polling Stations During Elections Day

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- **RASSED is Concerned about Using Sports Halls for Elections.**
- **Continuous Amendments on Polling Stations Confuses Voters.**

As part of RASSED's activities on monitoring the electoral process and measuring its relevance to international best practices related to electoral process, RASSED monitored the procedures adopted by the Independent Elections Commission (IEC). The monitoring results showed some abuses that would not guarantee equal opportunities among voters on polling day.

The statement indicated RASSED's concerns about using sports halls as polling stations, which may affect the execution of the electoral process, especially on the flow of voters. These results came after a survey conducted by RASSED team on the sports halls. As it was found that insistence on the use of sports halls will not serve the electoral process, for the sake of example, there are 46,718 voters in the Queen Zein Sports Hall in Zahran area in Amman, according to the IEC, one entrance to the hall will be allocated. This will lead to overcrowding and traffic in front of the gate. The roads leading to the polling stations in Irbid governorate cannot accommodate the voters. RASSED fear that female observers will lose their opportunity to vote due to the expected overcrowding. According to the data collected, RASSED recommends to change these halls and distribution of voters to traditional polling stations in order to preserve the right of citizens to vote and to avoid any imbalances in the system on elections day, with the need to inform voters in various ways and means to change the place of their polling stations, so not to disturb the polling and affect the electoral process.

To be more subjective, RASSED believes in describing the scene in numbers, in regards to sports halls, RASSED conducted an experiment based on realistic simulation of the voting process, the experiment shows that the rate of voting is 2 minutes and 37 seconds for each voter, and if we take for example Queen Zein Sports Hall in Zahran area, The hall is expected to accommodate 46,718 voters in the electoral district, and if we assume that the voting rate is up to 15% in the hall, it means that 7000 voters will vote, requiring 18,220 minutes to complete the polling process, nearly 303 hours. If we assume that



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there will be 10 voters distributed in 10 electoral booths at the same time, we will need 30 hours to ensure that citizens have equal opportunity to vote. All these figures were built on the basis of that the polling would proceed in an organized manner and without any other imbalances.

In another example in Zarqa city, Prince Hamza hall was allocated as a polling station to expect 33,786 voters, keeping in mind that the expected voting time of 2 minutes and 37 seconds and the hall has 10 voting booths and assuming that the voting rate is 20%, we need 29 hours to process only 20% of the voters. Another example is in Irbid city, where the Irbid college sports hall was allocated as a polling station to expect 18,914 voters and if we assume that the voting rate will reach 35% of the total number of voters in the hall, we will reach a total of 6,619 voters, which means that they will need 28.6 hours for people to exercise their right to vote. RASSED underlines once again that the resulting estimated numbers are based on the fact the electoral process will go with ease from 7:00am to 7:00pm and without any problems.

Regarding to polling stations for voters, it was found through monitoring voters' lists that several changes and continuous amendments on voters' polling stations were recorded, which means that the centers have been changed without informing citizens. Therefore, some citizens on polling day who wanted to exercise their right of voting, will be surprised with the change of the polling station, which will cause many problems, mostly the lack of participation of voters who are willing participate in the voting process, and from this point it was better for the IEC to conduct a campaign dedicated for the voters with amended polling stations. Knowing that not informing citizens on these repeated amendments, would limit accountability and transparency of the electoral process that the IEC concerned with as RASSED is worried about the voters losing their right of voting, especially voters whose polling stations were changed without their prior knowledge, as well as the reactions that may occur when the voters goes to the polling station specified in advance, then knows about the changes.

During RASSED's field work, many citizens complained about changing their polling stations to different location. Detailing these complaints of voters about the mass transfers of voters who were allocated in a polling station near their living area to other areas relatively distant, 5 km away in some cases, citizens who have been subjected to such cases indicated that they are not willing to participate in the elections due to changing their polling stations to distant locations.



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RASSED refers the production of executive instructions that are not correspondent with the articles of municipalities law to the delay in consulting the Law Interpretations Bureau by the IEC for voting and counting instructions. The IEC included that it is mandatory to vote for female candidate in the local councils elections, and then it was denied by the Law Interpretations Bureau in Resolution No. (3) issued by the Bureau on 32017/8/, according to the resolution: "The voter is not required to vote in the Local Council elections for at least one female member seat and voters are free to vote for both male and female seats in the Local Council" which disagrees to what is stated in the executive instructions and training sessions electoral committees of the IEC received. It would have been better for the IEC to use the available legislative tools and consult the Law Interpretations Bureau and the Legislation and Opinion Bureau earlier, the resolutions have caused confusion for voters and electoral committees, especially since the videos published on the IEC Facebook page mentioned that it is mandatory to vote for at least one female candidate "women quota seat", in addition to Electoral Atlas and CD's disseminated to public that included the same mistake. Number of women also applied for candidacy depending on the fifth vote.

However, the IEC amended its instructions after the candidates' registration legal period ended, to allow voters to vote for 5 male members, which was not allowed before candidates' registration period. We insist in RASSED that this would confuse the electoral scene and limit the transparency of the electoral process, RASSED also demands the IEC to pull the awareness materials that have been published and disseminated on social media and manually to public to keep the clarity of instructions on polling day.

The statement discussed the delay occurred by the IEC and that the commission did not deal with this issue in complete transparency in regards to procedures of running for municipal and decentralization elections especially in the procedures for female candidates who will win the seats of local councils by acclamation before the registration period of candidates. However, the IEC did not announce these instructions of the registration process which resulted that two local councils have not received any application for female candidates, as well as one female candidacy application only in 62 local councils, which means that these women will get seats dedicated for women in those local councils, and will not have the opportunity to compete for the post of chairman of the local council and the women quota in municipal councils.