

Statement by Al-Hayat Center on the Independent Commission for Elections

The necessity of expanding the council of the commission and discussing its bill in parallel with the Elections bill

A press release has been issued by Al-Hayat Center for Civil Society Development pointing important amendments to be reflected on the Independent Commission for Elections bill, including the necessity to represent the Jordanian Press Association, the Jordanian Bar Association and the Civil Society to the governing council of the commission, as well as, clearly stipulating the commission's jurisdiction in overseeing and administrating municipal councils' elections. Al-Hayat also pointed the importance of discussing the Elections bill, Municipal Elections bill and the Independent Commission for Elections bill in parallel by Parliament due to their high relevance and interdependency.

Based on its national and international experience in the field of elections observation and democratic practices, as per its monitoring of the 2007 and 2010 parliamentary elections and 2011 municipal elections in Jordan, as well as its participation in observation missions to Sudan, Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco, Al-Hayat Center for Civil Society Development believes the establishment of an Independent Commission for Elections is an important step on the path to achieve political reform and ensure the integrity of the electoral processes and their outcomes, thus encouraging greater participation by the citizens. Nonetheless, several amendments should be considered to the bill presented by the government, in order to guarantee the absolute independence of the commission in fulfilling its duties.

Moreover, Al-Hayat Center believes in the importance of concurrently discussing the bills of Elections, Municipal Elections and the Independent Commission for Elections by the House due to their high relevance to and interdependency on each other, where the separate deliberations on these bills might result in vague, incoherent or conflicting legislations. Furthermore, a participatory approach needs to be adopted in consulting with civil society organizations, political parties and interested groups on their views regarding the three bills.

These amendments should include the following:

1. Expand the representation to the commission's council to nine members, while stating the exact criteria for their selection in such way not open for interpretations. By which article 6-b-1 would read as follows:
"6-b-1 For the purpose of article 6-a above, the Prime Minister is to submit for His Majesty's approval a list of names to serve as Commissioners on the Council constituted as following:
 - a. One member selected by the Cabinet;
 - b. One member selected by the Upper House of Parliament;
 - c. One member selected by the Judicial Council;

