



**INTERNATIONAL REPUBLICAN INSTITUTE**  
**2005 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION ASSESSMENT IN EGYPT**  
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## **I. Executive Summary**

With President Hosni Mubarak's surprise announcement to amend the constitution and to hold the first direct, multi-candidate presidential elections in September of this year, it appeared that the Egyptian government had made political reform a priority and was committed to opening the door to greater political competition. The presidential election initially held symbolic significance and the promise of setting the stage for further reform and greater citizen participation. However, whether this symbolic step toward expanded democratic participation can be characterized as the start of a genuine democratic transition leading to a sustained system of democracy remains in doubt. The 2005 parliamentary election process suggests otherwise.

The three rounds of parliamentary elections in November and December 2005 appear to have been deeply flawed and will be most remembered for escalating tension over each successive round and outright violence resulting in 12 deaths. Overt intimidation cast a menacing shadow over the second and third phases of elections in particular, and low voter turnout—as with the presidential election—was a notable feature that underscored continued citizen apathy in the political process. Vote buying was also rampant. Yet despite this, it must be noted that open campaigning for opposition candidates was permitted and that some important procedural changes were made as a result of complaints emerging from the presidential election.

Overall, the parliamentary elections seem to indicate that government policies have left the secular opposition extremely weak. Although Egypt does provide for political party engagement—a positive attribute in a region where political parties are not always allowed—the lack of genuine political competition is a pervasive problem that constitutes a major impediment to sustained democratic change.

The most notable features that shaped the electoral environment for parliamentary elections were the fracture and competition between official National Democratic Party-endorsed candidates and those not selected who ran as independents; the inevitable weakness of the secular opposition parties as a result of emergency laws that limited development; and the ability of the Muslim Brotherhood to campaign freely and demonstrate its strength on the ground despite its status as an illegal organization. The new parliament, comprised of a majority of NDP members, the near absence of opposition party members, and a solid minority bloc of independents affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood will present a new challenge for the regime and leave democratic reformers uncertain as to their future.

From November 15-21, 2005, the International Republican Institute (IRI) conducted an election assessment mission in Egypt to evaluate the second round of the parliamentary elections. The goal of IRI's election assessment mission was to undertake a cross-sector analysis of the election environment and to examine conditions relating to the right to vote and be elected, including obstacles that hinder participation in electoral processes. The assessment team included 13 international delegates and IRI staff from Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Norway, Romania and the United States.

To conduct the assessment the IRI delegation met with government officials, civil society leaders, candidates, political party leadership, representatives of domestic observation bodies and judicial bodies before and on Election Day. The delegation assessed opportunities for fair competition, oversight and observation, access to media and overarching political dynamics that affect campaigning and elections.

On Election Day, the delegation divided into teams and deployed to Alexandria, Port Said, Ismailiya, Qalyubia and Fayoum. Since accreditation to international observers and access to polling stations was not provided by Egyptian governmental bodies, the IRI delegation did not fulfill the function of an official election observation. Instead, IRI delegates were limited to visiting the periphery of polling centers and gathering information by talking with voters, candidates, candidate representatives, domestic monitors and election officials when possible. IRI established direct links to domestic election monitors who also served as an important source of information.

IRI seeks to outline the primary findings from its assessment mission and to put forward suggestions to improve the conduct of elections in the future.

**IRI recommendations including the following:**

**Election Commission:** An independent election commission should be established to oversee the electoral process and set regulations regarding candidate registration, financing, media, campaigning, voter registration, voting and ballot counting.

**International and Domestic Monitors:** Domestic monitors should be guaranteed access inside General Committee (administrative centers where counting takes place) and Subcommittee election stations (auxiliary centers where voting takes place) to ensure that balloting and counting procedures are in accordance with Egyptian law. International monitors should also be provided similar privileges so that balloting and counting procedures can be ruled in accordance with international standards.

**Voter Rolls:** Voter lists should be reviewed and vetted by an independent body to ensure that deceased persons are removed from the list and that duplications, omissions, and name misspellings are corrected.

**Judicial Oversight:** Judges, rather than government employees, should directly supervise voting and should have full authority over the balloting station and its periphery without interference from security forces or party agents.

**Training:** All election officials should receive training on the application of the electoral law and voting procedures to ensure consistency.

**Election Materials:** All supplies of indelible ink used to prevent multiple voting should be tested in advance by judges at each polling station to ensure the consistent quality of such ink.

**Voting Privacy:** Election officials should ensure that a curtain providing adequate privacy for the voter is available and used at each polling station, and that no one present in the polling station interferes with the voting process.

**Ballot Counting:** To provide adequate checks on the counting process, candidate representatives, party agents, and civil society domestic monitors should be allowed to observe ballot counting at the close of voting inside polling stations. In addition, counting should take place at each subcommittee station rather than at the General Committee level.

**Campaigning:** According to Electoral Law No. 174, active campaigning activities should cease 48 hours in advance of voting. This law should be strictly enforced to ensure that no coercion of voters takes place on Election Day particularly in or around balloting stations.

**Election Violations:** Claims against perpetrators of clear and documented violations, such as vote buying and voter intimidation, should be brought to court and when evidence substantiates such a claim, the punishments stated in the electoral law for should be enforced.

**Security Forces:** Security forces and police must ensure the safety of all voters, candidates, candidate representatives, judges and other election officials. Security forces should be neutral, not passive, to guarantee an environment that is conducive for voting on Election Day.

## **II. Political Context**

Egypt's first direct presidential election generated controversy over the political value of such a change and the intentions of the Egyptian government with regard to long-term political reform that would weaken its monopoly on power. The low voter turnout, the highest estimate at only 23 percent, testified to general public disinterest. Since President Mubarak's victory in the election was not contested, many complained that the competition was mere theatre. Skeptics noted that the real test would come with parliamentary elections, where the ruling NDP would have to compete with secular opposition parties and independent candidates affiliated with the banned but tolerated Muslim Brotherhood.

In a healthy democracy, parliamentary elections would test the relative strength of political parties, which would present distinct electoral platforms that reflect the real needs of constituents, launch effective communications strategies and activate their base of support to gain votes. In the Egyptian context, however, political parties beyond the NDP are generally weak and unorganized. The NDP, as evidenced by the presidential elections, was the only party to wage a national campaign with extensive grassroots communication. In general, however, electoral politics tend to be personality-driven rather than issue-driven, and decisions of who to vote for tend to be based on networks of patronage.

The traditional opposition parties – Al Wafd, The Nasserite Party and Al Tagammu, in addition to the newest addition of Al Ghad Party – lack, for the most part, broad-based constituencies on a national level. In fact, over the past several decades, opposition parties have witnessed a shrinking, not growing, number of parliamentary seats. This weakness is a direct result of the continued enforcement of emergency legislation, which prohibits parties from holding rallies without prior permission, gives the security services unchecked powers to arrest and detain individuals, disallows strikes and demonstrations and gives the government powers to censor and shut down newspapers. Not only have the emergency laws affected the development of political parties, but such measures instilled a culture of alienation among the general population that decreases public interest and participation in political life and elections.

The laws that govern the activities and establishment of political parties and NGOs also influenced the electoral environment. Recent amendments to the Political Parties Law (Law 40/1977) maintain strict procedures for the establishment of new parties, as mandated by the Political Parties Affairs Committee (PPAC), which is affiliated with the Majlis al Shura (Consultative Council) and dominated by members of the ruling party. The law prohibits political parties based on religious identity and stipulates that new parties can be formed only if they "add something new" to existing parties. The PPAC has only approved three new parties over the past 30 years.

The restriction on party activities and formal political life also helps explain the apparent success of Muslim Brotherhood candidates in the parliamentary elections, who were allowed to campaign openly under the Brotherhood banner despite its illegal status. Whereas the secular opposition parties have been undercut by government policies, the Brotherhood has been permitted to operate on the local level

through charitable organizations to provide important social services, develop strong citizen-based networks, and offer a 'clean' alternative to widespread government corruption. Independents affiliated with the Brotherhood gained 15 seats in the 2000 parliament. For the 2005 People's Assembly, they increased their representation by six-fold to reach at least 88 seats (12 seats still remain undecided).

Contributing to this success may also have been internal power struggles and a lack of unity within the NDP that served to divide votes among its base of support. The party adopted a sophisticated point system to select candidates by ranking them based on popularity, communication skills, capacity to serve, and community reputation. This information was gathered from public opinion polls and input from local party leaders, but the central party leadership determined which candidates would represent the party in each district. Many hopeful candidates were not selected, and this led to a large number of disappointed party stalwarts. As a result, many left the party and ran as independents. Bitter fights between the officially sanctioned and 'independent' NDP candidates emerged. In some cases, the young guard reformists were given party support while the old guard members were sidelined. Some of these reformists, aligned with the NDP Policies Committee, were dealt a surprising defeat.

Independent candidates – whether affiliated with the Brotherhood or former NDP members – made far greater inroads with voters than the legal opposition parties. Besides the NDP, 13 political parties fielded candidates in various constituencies. In an effort to mount a coordinated campaign against the ruling party, 11 political parties and movements joined to form the United Front for Change (UFC), comprised of Al Wafd, Al Tagammu, Al Nasserri, along with the suspended Labour Party, the would-be Wassat and Karama parties, the Egyptian Movement for Change (Kifaya), the Popular Campaign for Change (Freedom Now), the National Coalition for Democratic Transformation and the National Alliance for Reform and Change. Absent from the UFC were two of the most relevant opposition forces; the UFC refused to include Al Ghad, and the Muslim Brotherhood refused to be included. The UFC, however, appears to have garnered few gains since candidates campaigned separately and found it difficult to adhere to a common platform. In total, UFC candidates gained only 12 seats. Al Ghad gained only two seats and had disappointing results, including the defeat of its party chairman, Ayman Nour, who had served two terms in his district.

The secular opposition suffered a devastating blow, and it remains to be seen if and how they will recuperate in the post-election period. The notable defeat of Ayman Nour, and Al Wafd Vice President Mounir Abdel Nour, in addition to the prominent NDP reformist Hossam Badrawi, underscores defeat of the liberal, reform-minded vanguard – to the notable gain of the Muslim Brotherhood.

On the technical side, the presidential election could be considered a test-run for the more competitive races that took place during parliamentary elections, and some modifications between the two elections were made. IRI, along with many international and domestic organizations, put forward a series of recommendations in advance of parliamentary elections to address some of the weaknesses noted in the presidential elections. While the shortness of time precluded some of the most important issues from being addressed – such as the revision and correction of the voter registry lists – others were achievable. The government of Egypt should be commended for making some of the suggested changes. In particular, the Ministry of

Interior decided to remove balloting sites from police stations, distributed semi-transparent ballot boxes to replace decrepit and non-transparent wooden boxes, and committed to providing indelible ink 24 hours in advance to each polling station.

In addition, two of the most controversial issues that emerged during the presidential election – judicial oversight of voting and domestic monitoring – were also addressed prior to parliamentary elections. In response to criticism that adequate oversight by judges was not provided in the presidential election, the Ministry of Interior adopted a three-phase approach for Parliamentary elections to facilitate greater coverage by a limited number of judges. Additionally, during presidential elections nearly 1,500 reformist judges were prevented from performing their constitutional duty of overseeing elections, in part due to tension between the Presidential Election Commission (PEC) and the Judges' Club. However, this scenario did not repeat itself for parliamentary elections, and to the best of IRI's knowledge, none of the judges were excluded from their oversight role.

Similarly, there was great tension regarding the role of domestic monitors in the lead-up to the presidential election. The PEC rejected the right of non-partisan monitors to enter polling stations, despite administrative court rulings allowing such activity and support from the Judges' Club to permit their presence. On Election Day, the PEC acquiesced and issued a statement allowing monitors to observe voting inside polling stations, but it was a belated attempt and insufficiently communicated to all judges and election officials.

This set an important precedent—underscored by continued international and domestic pressure—and the Parliamentary Election Commission indicated in advance of the campaign period that domestic observers would in fact be allowed to monitor the voting process. The government of Egypt should be lauded for implementing this change in policy, as non-partisan observation serves to enhance the credibility of the electoral process.

### **III. General Observations**

Even for those critics who believed the presidential election to be superficial at best, there was broad recognition that the lack of violence, which had marred elections in the past, was a significant achievement. However, the same cannot be said for parliamentary elections this year. In 2000, the parliamentary elections were plagued by widespread violence and interference by the security services, resulting in 10 casualties. For the 2005 parliamentary elections, the first phase was relatively calm, if tense. However the second and third phases witnessed an elevated incidence of thuggery, voter intimidation and violence.

The IRI assessment team was in Egypt for the second phase of elections, and teams were deployed to Alexandria, Port Said, Ismailiya, Fayoum and Qalyubia. The observations that the IRI teams gained from the assessment are limited to this phase. However, the general atmosphere of the election and many of the violations witnessed were repeated in all three phases and the run-off elections as well, according to reporting from the Independent Coalition for Election Monitoring and the Egyptian Association for the Democratic Development.



#### **IV. Domestic Monitoring**

Unlike the presidential election, when the government seemed to indicate its support for domestic monitoring but then backtracked, the Parliamentary Election Commission was forthcoming in its support for the role that domestic monitors would play. In a significant victory for non-partisan, domestic monitoring groups, the Parliamentary Election Commission set clear expectations and made public statements regarding the permissibility of domestic monitors inside polling stations to observe the opening of polling stations, voting and counting of ballots. The legal battles waged and won in the midst of the presidential campaign set an important precedent for domestic monitoring and this paved the way for a more accepted role for non-partisan, neutral oversight of the voting process.

The semi-governmental National Council for Human Rights (NCHR) was identified as the point of contact to coordinate between the Ministry of Justice and the domestic NGOs seeking to monitor. According to the government, domestic NGOs were required to register their monitors with the NCHR and request official identification badges from the Council. Some of the domestic groups questioned the integrity of the NCHR, since it is nominally affiliated with the government. They chose to bypass this procedure, notified the Ministry of Justice of their intent to monitor directly, and produced their own badges and accreditation. For the most part, these privately produced ID cards were sufficient to gain access to polling stations, but in some cases monitors were prevented from entering even if they carried the NCHR-produced ID card.

As with the presidential election, domestic monitoring groups worked through three broad coalitions that conducted trainings sessions and distributed materials to prepare their monitors to observe candidate registration, the campaign period, voting and the counting process. Reports from the groups in these coalitions, including the Independent Coalition for Election Monitoring (ICEM) and the Egyptian Association for the Support of Democratic Development (EASD) were consistent in their observations and citation of violations. In the first phase of the election, ICEM and EASD monitors were allowed to perform their duties, for the most part, with only sporadic interference from the security services, party representatives or judges. During the second and third phase of the election, however, the position taken toward the monitors was far more aggressive and many were prevented from entering the polling stations. Several were arrested or beaten by police and candidate supporters primarily affiliated with the ruling party.

Of particular concern was the interference with domestic observation during the counting process; even in the first phase, less than 10 percent of the monitors were allowed to observe this critical step in the election process thus impugning the credibility of the election results. Despite assurances from the Election Commission, domestic observers were systematically denied the right to observe the ballots being counted.

In all phases, domestic monitors observed clear violations of the electoral law, including the late opening of polling stations, voter intimidation, vote buying, lack of voting secrecy, misuse or absence of indelible ink, incorrect or missing names on the

voter registry, and continued campaign activity on Election Day. Irregularities were not exclusive to the ruling party and its candidates or supporters, and some irregularities were perhaps unintentional due to lack of organization or competency.

Such violations were observed across many governorates, and were reminiscent of the 2000 parliamentary and other elections that undermined confidence in the electoral process and the regime's commitment to democratic reform. The National Council for Human Rights, which was tasked by the government to follow up on accounts of violations, has called upon the domestic monitoring groups to submit reports. For the most part, however, the monitoring groups have not supplied this information to the NCHR since the Council has no legal authority to resolve complaints.

Despite significant challenges in accomplishing their mission, domestic monitors played a critical role in highlighting, documenting and publicizing violence, intimidation, and legal violations that occurred during the election process. While there was a lack of consistency in the training and preparedness of the various monitoring bodies, most conducted themselves in a professional manner, and earned the public's trust in providing a crucial watchdog function. As the election proceeded and battles became more heated, the manipulations intensified and tolerance for the presence of domestic monitors declined. IRI received reports from multiple monitoring groups that during the second and third phase, they suffered significantly more harassment and their ability to maneuver was much more restricted. Many monitors put their physical safety at risk to perform their duty, and they should be commended for their commitment and courage.

## **V. Judicial Oversight**

In 2000, President Mubarak gave oversight authority for parliamentary elections to the judiciary in an effort to demonstrate the regime's commitment to enhancing the credibility of elections. However, the judges were not granted complete authority over the process from start to finish, and many resented compromising their integrity in order to justify a flawed electoral process. Among other issues, they had control of the polling stations, but not the perimeter around the polling area where voters sometimes faced intimidation.

In advance of presidential elections, the Judges' Club – the primary association of all judges in Egypt – took a much more active and vocal role to ensure a transparent election process and to expand its political independence. Judges have long been considered the most respected and politically neutral authority in Egypt, and the actions of the Judges' Club through this process substantiated this view. Despite obstacles from the Presidential Election Commission, the Judges' Club took its role seriously and consistently pushed for total supervision over the process and international standards that would help ensure a fair and credible election. The role of the judges was perhaps the most encouraging element of the Presidential election, and while some of their demands were met, there still remained significant loopholes.

The Judges Club issued a report in early November that outlined its criticism of the presidential election, and communicated its concerns to the relevant ministries. As such, the Judges' Club deserves credit for some of the procedural changes that were

made in advance of the parliamentary elections, including the removal of polling stations from police stations, reducing the number of voters assigned to each polling site to facilitate voting, and the use of indelible ink in all polling stations.

Despite the efforts of the Judges' Club to ensure a transparent process, there were instances during the presidential election of judges taking individual decisions contrary to the clear dictates of the electoral law. This phenomena continued during the Parliamentary elections, and domestic monitors as well as IRI delegates observed judges who permitted voters to cast their ballot without the proper identification, prevented voters who did have the proper identification, did not guarantee secrecy for voters, and allowed voting without proper usage of indelible ink. In addition, some judges prevented domestic monitors from entering the polling stations or observing the counting process, a right which had been guaranteed by the Ministry of Justice.

Additionally, IRI delegates heard accounts from domestic monitors that full judicial oversight of each ballot box was not truly implemented. This issue has been a persistent problem: with the presidential elections, 54,000 ballot boxes were combined into approximately 12,000 polling stations, but the number of judges still fell short. Although parliamentary elections were organized in three phases to compensate for this disparity, in some polling stations judges were responsible for multiple ballot boxes and in other places, state attorneys or other government employees were employed instead of bench judges. This led to a lack of consistency in the application of the electoral laws and a lack of confidence among the public in voting and counting procedures.

The Judges' Club continues to assert itself as a forceful advocate for transparent elections, and prior to the third phase of voting, reformists in the Judges' Club called upon their colleagues to close polling stations if they witnessed significant violations by the security forces. Tension between the pro-regime Supreme Council of Judges and the reformist-oriented Judges' Club reached unprecedented levels and the leadership of the club threatened to boycott the last round of balloting.

## **VI. Voter Registration and Voter Lists**

A fair election must start with a credible voter list, since this determines the very basis of whose voice is heard. It is widely accepted that problems with the voter registry in Egypt are an intrinsic weakness that severely limits the opportunity for democratic elections to take place. A complete overhaul of the list is necessary in order to enhance the fairness of elections. IRI and other organizations made such a recommendation after the presidential election, but the limited time between elections made this a difficult proposition.

To begin with, the voter registration is open only for three months each year, and eligible citizens who wanted to register were not given the opportunity to do so after a date was set for parliamentary elections. Keeping the registration closed disfranchised voters who might have been interested in voting given the changing political dynamics in recent months. The inability for new voters to register may be one factor that contributed to the low turnout rate. This led to another related problem: IRI heard accounts of citizens being allowed to vote without voter cards in

order to boost the turnout level, which compromises the integrity of voting procedures.

More importantly, a careful review of the voter lists did not occur before the election. This meant that names were missing from the election registrar, deceased persons were included on the list and other irregularities were present that had grave implications for the fairness of the election process. A voter list filled with inaccurate names means that legitimate voters are often unable to cast their ballot, and that the opportunity for manipulation or double-voting is widespread. IRI delegates repeatedly heard accounts from domestic monitors and opposition party leaders of supporters who tried to vote and found that they were not listed on the registry. In some cases, IRI teams witnessed frustrated voters searching for their names on voter registry lists, only to discover that they had been removed since the previous election.

A more deliberate form of manipulation that the IRI delegation heard about was collective registration in order to increase the ranks of a party's supporters on the voter rolls; in all cases, this was attributed to the NDP. In one example, IRI's team in Alexandria heard the case of the Attareen district, where the Wafd candidate reviewed the voter list and discovered 7,000 names of individuals that do not reside in the district. The Wafd party brought a suit before the administration court to request a correction of the list. The court ruled in favor of the Wafd candidate; however, the Parliamentary Election Committee disregarded this ruling and election officials proceeded to hold the election as scheduled.

IRI delegates also heard accounts from domestic monitors of problems with the voter lists on Election Day itself. For instance, voter lists were not present at all polling sites, and in some cases, voter lists were tampered with between the first round and run-off round of the elections. Without a credible verification process, where voters can review the voter rolls to ensure their names are present, elections in Egypt will continue to suffer from fundamental flaws.

## **VII. Election Day**

### **Voter Turnout**

According to official estimates from the government, voter turnout for the parliamentary elections was around 30 percent for first rounds and 23 percent for run-off rounds. According to one domestic monitoring group, based on on-site counting at a substantial sample of polling stations, the turnout rate was significantly lower for the second and third rounds compared with government figures.

**Government Voter Turnout Rates:**

First Phase: 29 percent, run-off: 23 percent  
Second Phase: 28.6 percent, run-off: 23.4 percent  
Third Phase: 32.1 percent, run-off: 25.1 percent

**ICEM Voter Turnout Rates:**

First Phase: 34 percent, run-off: 24 percent  
Second Phase: 18 percent, run-off: 17 percent  
Third Phase: 18 percent, run-off: 8 percent

These rates are roughly comparable to what was cited for the presidential election. In the minds of many Egyptians, the result from the presidential election was a foregone conclusion so there was little incentive to vote. However parliamentary elections presented stiff competition between the ruling party, opposition and independent candidates. The fact that turnout was no higher than that of presidential elections is particularly noteworthy and indicates a lack of confidence and interest in the election itself.

IRI teams deployed for the second stage of elections observed a very low level of interest on the part of potential voters. At one polling station in Alexandria, for example, by 2:00 PM only 26 voters had cast their ballots out of a total of 900 registered voters in that location. Similarly low levels were observed by all IRI teams, though larger numbers were observed in the late afternoon.

What made the low number of voters entering the polling stations all the more noticeable were the large crowds of candidate supporters gathering near the entrances. In Port Said, Alexandria and Ismailiya in particular, the number of aggressive candidate supporters loitering in front of polling stations far outweighed the number of voters who were actually entering the sites. A potential voter could not help but be intimidated by such a scene, and the incidence of inflammatory sloganeering and violence created a less than inviting environment.

**Campaigning**

Pervasive and fierce campaigning continued in the close vicinity of the polling centers by many party and independent candidates on Election Day. This form of illegal campaigning likely played a role both in inciting violence and suppressing voter turnout.

IRI delegation teams in Port Said, Alexandria, Ismailiya, Qalyubia and Fayoum witnessed extensive campaigning throughout Election Day. Law No. 174 states that campaigning includes "the activities of the nominee and his supporters, and targets persuading voters of his election, in limited and public meetings, dialogues, and by publishing and distributing election campaign materials and posters as well as by

using audio-visual printed and electronic media." The electoral guidelines also state that campaigning activity should cease 48 hours in advance of Election Day by all candidates and supporters.

Whereas for the presidential election, nearly all the campaign activity was generated by the NDP, for the parliamentary elections, campaign materials and activities on Election Day were observed on behalf of NDP, Muslim Brotherhood, opposition party and independent candidates. This included distribution of leaflets, hanging of posters on and around polling stations, and roving loudspeakers in automobiles broadcasting slogans, among other activities.

This activity, in addition to being illegal, compromised the neutrality of the polling station. At times, the campaigning could be considered coercive. For example, IRI teams observed in several locations voters being verbally pressured by candidate supporters. In Ismailiya, an IRI Egyptian staff member was approached and pressured to vote for a particular candidate. Inside and outside of polling stations, voters should have the full opportunity to choose their candidate without any interference from party representatives or security forces.

Another concerning phenomena of the parliamentary election was the use of religious messages in campaigning. Law No. 175, Article 11, states that all election propaganda for the People's Assembly must adhere to a "commitment to maintain national unity and abstention from using religious slogans." Yet independent candidates affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood campaigned under the banner of "Islam is the Solution," and supporters chanted: "It's not for position, nor for power, not for money, nor for party...it's for Islam and for God."

Although some of these slogans were used in the 2000 elections, the Brotherhood was not as open about campaigning under its banner at that time, and their electoral presence was much stronger in this year's elections. A prominent NDP official acknowledged the illegality of campaigning with such slogans, yet noted that the government was unable to stop it unless it was willing to risk a major confrontation with the Brotherhood. In the view of this official, the government chose the lesser of two evils and allowed such propaganda to continue in order to avoid a politically costly move that would damage its support among the public. In the absence of candidate debates or meaningful public debate about party platforms or policy initiatives, the religious imagery of these slogans carried weighty proportions.

### **Vote Buying**

One of the most egregious election violations during the Parliamentary elections was the use of bribes and vote buying. Law No. 173 states that such activity is punishable by fines and imprisonment, yet such discipline is rarely, if ever, brought against the perpetrators of such actions.

IRI's team in Port Said witnessed direct vote buying between supporters of the NDP candidate in that constituency and potential voters. IRI delegates overheard conversations advising voters to wait until later in the day when the price for votes would be higher. The rate for votes varied based on constituency and party from 20 Egyptian pounds (\$3.50) to more than 300 pounds (\$52). Domestic monitors

reported countless incidents in all governorates, and this activity extended to NDP, opposition and independent candidate supporters.

The extent to which vote buying occurred in all phases of the election – and the extent to which it was tolerated by police forces, election officials and party leadership – serves to underscore the bankruptcy of participatory politics in Egypt. Few Egyptians care enough to vote, and many of those who do are motivated by financial considerations. It is not known what percentage of ballots cast are the result of bribes, yet the incidence is extensive enough – and certainly well-known enough among the public – to call into question the accuracy of the results.

### **Violence and Harassment**

The most remarkable feature of the election was the level of intimidation and violence at polling sites that IRI delegates visited during the second phase of the election. Of the more than 40 elections that IRI delegates had collectively observed, the consensus was that this was one of the tensest elections they had ever witnessed. The apprehension in the air was palpable, with large groups of candidate 'supporters' gathered outside the polling stations waiting for provocation or confrontation.

The presidential elections were commendable for the lack of violence and relatively calm environment for balloting when compared with previous elections. Unfortunately, it seems that Egypt has returned to the thuggery of years past. The violence appears to have worsened with each round of the parliamentary elections.

In an effort to not repeat the experience of the 2000 elections, the Ministry of Interior gave clear directives to the security forces not to interfere with the voting process. For the first phase of voting, the security forces were described as being neutral, but some observers noted that their behavior was more passive than neutral. While they did not interfere with voting, they also did not prevent intimidation of voters or violence between candidate supporters.

IRI delegates observed a heavy police and security presence during the second phase of voting in Port Said, Ismailiya and Alexandria. The IRI team in Port Said witnessed a brutal and bloody fistfight between candidate supporters, during which police stood by silently and did not intervene. In Alexandria, IRI delegates narrowly missed a bottle-throwing fight in one polling station and observed the beginning of a confrontation between Brotherhood and NDP supporters at another station.

According to a prominent NDP member, the security services were caught in a difficult position: They refrained from interfering to avoid any suggestion of favoritism to the NDP, yet by doing so, they neglected to keep the peace and ensure the safety of voters. According to domestic monitoring groups, the passivity of the security forces benefited the ruling party since NDP supporters were generally more aggressive at the polling centers.

With increased state intervention, representatives of the Muslim Brotherhood accused the government of detaining more than 1,250 of its supporters over the course of the three-phase voting. In addition, the media watchdog group Reporters Without Borders raised complaints that police attacked television crews and journalists in the first,

second and third rounds. The group also cited 18 cases of journalists working for local and international media who were detained, beaten, denied entry to polling stations or had their cameras and phones confiscated.

### **Compromised Voting**

Although the government committed itself to ensuring the authenticity of indelible ink at each polling station, IRI delegates heard and observed many accounts of ink that washed or rubbed off before the mandatory 24-hour period concluded. The type of ink being used was not consistent; in some stations it was an inkpad, and in others it was liquid. Faulty ink meant that some voters had the opportunity to vote more than once. Given the incidence of vote buying and other forms of fraud, ensuring the quality of the ink is imperative.

In general, IRI delegates perceived most judges to be conducting themselves with integrity and in a professional manner. However, in certain cases, judges did not adhere to the electoral laws and compromised the voting. In several polling stations, IRI delegates observed more than one person behind the voting curtain at a time. At one polling station in Ismailiya, the IRI team noticed that the judge was looking at the markings on each ballot before dropping it in the ballot box, and this judge also permitted voters to use the party card as a substitute for the official voting card. In Fayoum, the IRI team witnessed a judge himself mark a ballot for a voter. While these incidents may be the exception and not the norm, judges have a greater responsibility to uphold the letter of the law.

### **Counting and Ballot Security**

Since international organizations did not receive official accreditation from the government, IRI was unable to observe any part of the counting process or witness how ballot boxes were transported at the conclusion of voting. In addition, only a small percentage of domestic monitors were permitted to observe the counting process, despite a clear indication from the Parliamentary Election Committee and the Ministry of Justice that they should be allowed to do so.

Of the few domestic observers who were able to observe the counting, their reports are disturbing. In particular, ballot boxes from many auxiliary polling sites were being counted together at a centralized polling center. This invites opportunity to compromise the integrity of ballots and makes a proper recount extremely difficult. Domestic monitors relayed some incidents of missing ballot boxes or the number of ballots exceeding the total number of registered voters for that particular polling station.

IRI delegates heard accounts that in many cases, domestic observers and opposition candidate representatives were told they could not observe the counting because of limits on space inside the general committees, yet NDP candidate representatives were allowed to witness the counting. Even if no violations occurred during voting or counting, if there are no neutral observers to corroborate this, the validity of the process will be called into question. Preventing party and non-partisan observers from being present for the counting is a significant shortfall that must be addressed to instill confidence in the electoral process.



## VIII. IRI Recommendations for Future Elections in Egypt

- **Election Commission:** An independent election commission should be established to oversee the electoral process and set regulations regarding candidate registration, financing, media, campaigning, voter registration, voting and ballot counting. A new commission should be established that is composed of respected individuals who can maintain independence from executive branch ministries and any political party. Such a commission should be subject to reasonable judicial review if claims against the actions of the commission are raised.
- **International and Domestic Monitors:** Domestic monitors should be guaranteed access inside general committee and subcommittee election stations to ensure that balloting and counting procedures are in accordance with Egyptian law and to encourage confidence in the integrity of the process on the part of citizens. Given the decision of the PEC and State Court rulings regarding the permissibility of domestic monitors there is a clear precedent and mandate for the unchallenged right of domestic monitors to participate in elections, alongside candidate agents.

International monitors should also be provided the same rights as domestic monitors so that balloting and counting procedures can be ruled in accordance with international standards.

- **Voter Rolls:** Voter lists should be reviewed and vetted by an independent body to ensure that deceased persons are removed from the list and that duplications, omissions, and name misspellings are corrected. The list should be easily accessible to the public in advance of the election so that citizens can determine if they are included on the rolls and correct any mistakes.
- **Judicial Oversight:** Since 2000, judges have been tasked with oversight of the election process, yet significant limitations on their authority has restricted their ability to effectively guarantee free and fair elections. Judges, rather than state employees, should directly supervise voting and should have full authority over the balloting station and its periphery. Security forces should only intervene to guarantee public security at the request of the supervising judge. As bench judges are insufficient in number to supervise the entire electoral procedure, the Judges' Club should have input in determining a list of names from judicial organizations to provide assistance.
- **Training:** All election officials should receive training on the application of the electoral law and voting procedures to ensure consistency. Wide variation of knowledge was observed in the parliamentary elections.
- **Election Materials:** All supplies of indelible ink used to prevent multiple voting should be tested in advance by judges at each polling station to ensure the consistent quality of such ink.

- **Voting Privacy:** Election officials should ensure that a curtain providing adequate privacy for the voter is available and used at each polling station, and that no one present in the polling station interferes with the voting process.
- **Ballot Counting:** To provide adequate checks on the counting process, candidate representatives, party agents, NGO domestic monitors, and international monitors should be allowed to observe ballot counting at the close of voting inside polling stations. To instill greater confidence in the process, judges who oversee counting should provide observers with a copy of the vote tally from each polling site that can be used to corroborate official results.

In addition, counting should take place at each subcommittee station rather than at the General Committee level. This would allow more space for monitors and candidate representatives to observe and would keep the results from ballot boxes separate and distinct. This would minimize the opportunity for fraud, and when necessary, allow for a recount more easily.

- **Campaigning:** According to Electoral Law No. 174, active campaigning activities should cease 48 hours in advance of voting, defined as "the activities of the nominee and his supporters, and targets persuading voters of his election, in limited and public meetings, dialogues, and by publishing and distributing election campaign materials and posters as well as by using audio-visual printed and electronic media." This law should be strictly enforced to ensure that no coercion of voters takes place on Election Day particularly in or around balloting stations.
- **Election Violations:** Claims against perpetrators of clear and documented violations, such as vote buying and voter intimidation, should be brought to court and when evidence substantiates such a claim, the punishments stated in the electoral law for should be enforced.
- **Security Forces:** Intervention on the part of the security forces should be authorized only in situations necessary to guarantee the security of voters, judges, election officials and candidate supporters. Under no circumstances should the security forces prevent voters from gaining access to voting stations or undertake any activities that benefit one candidate over another.

## **IX. Conclusion**

Despite negative aspects of the 2005 parliamentary elections, it is possible to highlight several notable achievements when compared with elections in the past. First, the role played by the domestic monitoring groups and the Judges' Club – as with the presidential election – has been important, as elements of civil society begin to take a more active role in advocating for greater democratic freedom and pluralism. In addition, between monitoring groups and independent media, the government has permitted a new level of scrutiny from the domestic and international community. Several of IRI's delegates had spent time in Egypt in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and noted that the current public debate about political reform and criticism of the ruling party and the government would have been unthinkable 10 or 15 years ago. The relative freedom with which state-run and independent press can debate these issues is an indicator of progress that should not go unmentioned.

However, it would be irresponsible to conclude this assessment report without underscoring the substantial reforms that are needed to improve the general political climate and to enhance the opportunity for participatory governance and meaningful elections. Egypt is at a pivotal moment in its history. The first direct Presidential elections in September 2005, however flawed, seemed to indicate a movement forward on the part of the Egyptian government toward further reform. The recent experience with parliamentary elections has disappointed many and tempered expectations. If the government is serious about living up to its commitments, as stated in President Mubarak's election platform, we encourage it to demonstrate its seriousness with actions and not just words.

## APPENDIX A:



### **Egyptian Parliamentary Election Assessment November 15 – 22, 2005 IRI Delegate Biographies**

#### **Myriam Aucar (Lebanon)**

Myriam Aucar is an attorney-at-law for the firm of Younes & Mikaoui and she has managed multiple electoral campaigns for candidates in the Lebanese Parliament since 1992.

#### **Dorian Branea (Romania)**

Dorian Branea is the owner and CEO of Heron Ventures Company in Romania. Mr. Branea has served as the spokesperson for the Timis County Executive Council and as the spokesperson for the National Liberal Party.

#### **Joanna Levison (U.S.A.)**

Joanna Levison served as a Foreign Affairs Officer in the Middle East Division at the U.S. Department of State's Office of Human Rights and Democracy Promotion from 2000-04. Previously she served as a Senior Program Officer at the National Democratic Institute from 1992-2000 in their Eurasia division and served as their Resident Program Director in Baku, Azerbaijan from 1995-1997.

#### **Lars-Jørgen Kihlberg Olsen (Norway)**

Lars-Jørgen Kihlberg Olsen is the Information Consultant for the Oslo branch of the Conservative Party of Norway (Høyre) and has been active in the leadership of the party since 2000. Mr. Olsen was elected to his local municipality council at the age of 18 and from 1999-2003 he was the chairman of the municipal committee for social care and health services.

#### **Rob Reid (U.S.A)**

Rob Reid is a high technology entrepreneur and investor based in San Francisco, California. In 1998 he founded Listen.com, an online music company. Previously Mr. Reid worked for Endeavor, a New York-based not-for-profit that helps large-scale entrepreneurial companies in developing countries, like in Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Uruguay, and Morocco. In 1989-1990 he was based in Cairo as a Fulbright Scholar, where he conducted research on Egypt's secular political parties.

#### **Lyn Withey (U.S.A)**

Lyn Withey serves as the Vice President of Public Affairs for International Paper. From 1984-1988, Mrs. Withey served as Special Assistant to the President for Legislative Affairs specializing in national security, foreign policy, and international trade. She also served at the Department of Treasury as Deputy Assistant Secretary and Special Assistant for Legislative Affairs.

**Elizabeth Dugan (IRI)**

Elizabeth Dugan was appointed Vice President of the International Republican Institute (IRI) in February 2005. Prior to returning to IRI, she served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) at the U.S. Department of State, where she directed the bureau's Human Rights and Democracy Fund.

**Scott Mastic (IRI)**

Scott Mastic is IRI's Deputy Director for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). In this capacity, he is responsible for overseeing IRI programs in Morocco, Palestine, Jordan, Egypt, Oman, Qatar, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Mr. Mastic is proficient in Arabic.

**Paul McCarthy (IRI)**

Paul McCarthy is IRI's Resident Country Director based in Amman, Jordan where he oversees the institute's program focusing on encouraging local government accountability and responsiveness to citizens, and increasing citizens' input in municipal decision-making through improved advocacy and leadership skills.

**Danya Greenfield (IRI)**

Danya Greenfield currently oversees IRI's new program in Egypt, which pursues a long-term strategy to stimulate public support for political reform. Before joining IRI, she lived in Cairo for a year and a half and worked with the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights. She speaks classical and colloquial Arabic.

**Idriss Touijer (IRI)**

Idriss Touijer joined IRI-Morocco as the National Political Party Coordinator in January, 2005. Mr. Touijer is a primary liaison with political leaders and party officials, coordinating intensive training programs for Moroccan party activists and elected officials. He speaks fluent Arabic, French and English.

**David Sands (IRI)**

Since 2004, David Sands has been a program officer with the Iraq division of IRI, where he plays a lead role in coordinating civil society and public advocacy programs. Mr. Sands studied at the American University of Cairo and was a Fulbright Scholar in Amman, Jordan. Mr. Sands is highly proficient in modern standard and colloquial Arabic.

**Jennifer Elinow (IRI)**

Jennifer Elinow joined IRI in June 2005 and has been working as a Program Assistant in the MENA division. Ms. Elinow's primary duties have been coordinating programs in Pakistan and the Gulf Region.

**Marwa Salah (IRI)**

Marwa Salah is the program assistant for IRI's program in Cairo, Egypt. Before joining IRI, Ms. Salah worked on issues of democratic development with the Group for Democratic Development / United Group as a trainer and researcher.

**APPENDIX B:****Parliamentary Election Results**

<b>2005 People's Assembly</b>	<b>Number of Seats</b>
National Democratic Party Official NDP (152 Seats) + Independents Affiliated with NDP (172)	324 Seats
Muslim Brotherhood 34 (First Phase) + 42 (Second Phase) + 12 (Third Phase)	88 Seats
Opposition (6 Al Wafd + 2 Al Tagammu + 2 Al Ghad + 2 Al Karama)	12 Seats
Independents (4 leaning toward the opposition)	8 Seats
Open (will be determined by a re-run, date unknown)	12 Seats
Appointed Members (5 Women - 4 Copts - 1 Muslim appointed by President Mubarak)	10 Seats
<b>Total</b>	<b>454</b>

<b>Elected Women Members – 4 Seats</b> (All from the National Democratic Party)				
Amal Osman - NDP	Giza	Dokki	1 <sup>st</sup> phase	1 <sup>st</sup> round
Dr. Shahinaz El-Nagar - NDP	Cairo	Manial	1 <sup>st</sup> phase	Run off
Gamatat Abd Al-Halim Hasan Rafi - NDP	Qalubia	Toukh	2 <sup>nd</sup> phase	Run off
Haiam Abd Al-Aziz Omar Amer - NDP	Dakahlia	Belkas	3 <sup>rd</sup> phase	1 <sup>st</sup> round

## **PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS: FIRST PHASE**

### **Constituencies:**

Cairo, Giza, Manoufiya, Beni Suef, Minya, Asyut, Matruh, Al Wadi Al Jadid

**Total seats for First Phase: 164 seats (82 districts)**

### **NDP: 120 Seats**

Cairo: 36 seats.

Giza: 22 seats.

Monofia: 11 seats.

Bani Swif: 9 seats.

Menia: 16 seats.

Asiout: 18 seats.

Matrouh: 4 seats.

Al Wadi Al- Gadid: 4 seats.

### **Muslim Brotherhood: 34 Seats**

Cairo: 9 seats.

Giza: 4 seats.

Monofia: 9 seats.

Bani Swif: 4 seats.

Menia: 6 seats.

Asiout: 2 seats.

### **Independent: 4 Seats**

Cairo: 2 seats.

Monofia: 2 seats.

### **Al Wafd Party: 2 Seats**

Cairo: 1 seat.

Giza: 1 seat.

### **Al Tagammu Party: 2 Seats**

Cairo: 1 seat.

Giza: 1 seat.

### **Al Ghad Party: 1 Seat**

Cairo: 1 seat.

### **Al-Karama Movement (Independent): 1 seat**

Bani Swif: 1 seat.

## **PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS: SECOND PHASE**

### **Constituencies:**

Alexandria, Al Bahira, Ismailiya, Port Said, Suez, Qalyubiya, Gharbiya, Fayoum, Qena

### **Total seats for Second Phase: 144 seats**

3 districts (6 seats) will face a runoff again; the following 138 seats have been determined:

### **NDP: 90 Seats**

Alexandria: 11 seats.  
Al Behira: 20 seats.  
Ismaila: 2 seats.  
Port Said: 2 seats.  
Suez: 2 seats.  
Qalyobia: 8 seats.  
Al Gharbia: 16 seats.  
Al Fioum: 9 seats.  
Qena: 20 seats.

### **Muslim Brotherhood: 42 Seats**

Alexandria: 8 seats.  
Al Behira: 6 seats.  
Ismaila: 3 seats.  
Port Said: 2 seats.  
Suez: 2 seats.  
Qalyobia: 7 seats.  
Al Gharbia: 10 seats.  
Al Fioum: 3 seats.  
Qena: 1 seat.

### **Independent: 4 Seats**

Alexandria: 1 seat  
Port Said: 1 seat.  
Qalyobia: 1 seat.  
Qena: 1 seat.

### **Wafd Party: 2 Seats**

Ismailia: 1 seat.  
Port Said: 1 seat.



## **PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS: THIRD PHASE**

**Constituencies:** Daqhliya, Sharqiya, Qafar Al Sheikh, Damyat, Sohag, Aswan, Red Sea, Northern Sinai, Southern Sinai

### **Total seats for Third Phase: 136 seats (68 districts)**

6 seats will face a runoff again; the following 130 seats have been determined:

#### **NDP: 114 Seats**

Dakahlia: 29 seats.

Al-Sharkia: 24 seats.

Kafr Al-Sheikh: 10 seats.

Domitta: 7 seats.

Sohag: 25 seats.

Aswan: 5 seats.

Red Sea: 4 seats.

Northern Sinai: 6 seats.

Southern Sinai: 4

#### **Muslim Brotherhood: 12 Seats**

Dakahlia: 3 seats.

Al-Sharkia: 3 seats.

Kafr Al-Sheikh: 2 seats.

Domitta: 1 seat.

Sohag: 3 seats.

#### **Independent: 0 Seats**

#### **Wafd Party: 2 Seats**

Al-Sharkia: 1 seat.

Kafr Al-Sheikh: 1 seat.

#### **Al Ghad Party: 1 Seat**

Aswan: 1 seat.

#### **Al-Karama Movement (Independent): 1 seat**

Kafr Al-Sheikh: 1 seat.

**APPENDIX C:****Egyptian Opposition Party Representation: People's Assembly (2005)**

<b>Wafd Party – 6 Seats</b>				
Name	Governorate	District	Phase No.	Round
1- Tarek Mohammed El-Said Ahmed Sebak	Cairo	Rood El-Farag	1 <sup>st</sup> phase	Run off
2- Ahmed Hussien Nasser	Giza	Kerdasa	1 <sup>st</sup> phase	Run off
3- Salah El-dien Hasan Mahmoud Hasan Al-Saygh	Ismailya	Ismailya	2 <sup>nd</sup> phase	Run off
4- Mohammed Moustafa Mohammed Ahmed Sherdi	Port Said	Manakh	2 <sup>nd</sup> phase	Run off
5- Mahmoud Abaza	Al-Sharkia	Al-Telin	3 <sup>rd</sup> phase	Run off
6- Mohammed Abd El-Aliem Ahmed Dawood	Kafr Al-Sheikh	Fooh	3 <sup>rd</sup> phase	Run off
<b>Al-Tagammu Party – 2 Seats</b>				
7- Mohammed Abd Al-Aziz Sha'aban	Cairo	Hadaik Al-Koba	1 <sup>st</sup> phase	Run off
8- Mohammed Ahmed Abd AL-Motelib Telima	Giza	Oseim	1 <sup>st</sup> phase	Run off
<b>Al-Karama Movement: 2 Seats</b> (not an official political party)				
9- Saad Abdo Abd Al Wahid Kotb Agroud	Bani Swif	Beba	1 <sup>st</sup> phase	Run off
10- Hamdin Sabahi	Kafr Al-Sheikh	Hamoul	3 <sup>rd</sup> phase	Run off
<b>Al-Ghad Party – 2 Seats</b> (not a member of the National Front for Change)				
11- Ragab Helal Badwi Hemeda	Cairo	Abdein	1 <sup>st</sup> phase	Run off
12- Mohammed Mahmoud Ali Hamid	Aswan	Komombo	3 <sup>rd</sup> phase	Run off

## Independent Members

Moustafa Bakri <i>(affiliated with National Coalition for Democratic Change)</i>	Cairo	Al-Tebin	1 <sup>st</sup> phase	Run off
Tala'at Ahmed Esmat Al-Sadat <i>(Affiliated with Al-Ahrar but ran as an Independent)</i>	Monofia	Tla	1 <sup>st</sup> phase	Run off
Hesham Moustafa Khalil Kamel	Cairo	Kasr Al-Nil	1 <sup>st</sup> phase	Run off
Mohammed Anwar Esmat Al-Sadat	Monofia	Tla	1 <sup>st</sup> phase	Run off
Abd El-Malik Abd El-Fatah Mohammed El-Zeni	Port Said	Port Fo'ad	2 <sup>nd</sup> phase	Run off
Taher Hozain Mohammed Badawi	Qena	Isna	2 <sup>nd</sup> phase	Run off
Kamal Ahmed Mohammed Ahmed	Alexandria	Atarin	2 <sup>nd</sup> phase	Run off
Dr. Gamal Ali Zahran Hasan <i>(affiliated with National Coalition for Democratic Change)</i>	Qaluibia	Shoubra Al-Khima	2 <sup>nd</sup> phase	Run off

**The Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)****Evaluation of the Media's Performance during  
The Parliamentary Elections  
(27 October – 3 December 2005)**

Neither the law on exercising political rights nor the rules regulating election campaigns issued by the Supreme Elections Commission in September 2005 make any reference to rules regulating the role of the media in parliamentary elections as there was in the law regulating presidential elections. Rather, the Ministry of Information sufficed with announcing standards for media neutrality during the elections on 27 October 2005. The application of these standards is limited to state-owned television channels and excluded the state-owned newspapers.

The rules regulating election campaigns states that the “maximum each candidate may spend on their election campaign is LE70,000 and the maximum that may be spent in the case of run-off elections is LE30,000.” Yet it is difficult to control this ceiling with regard to paid advertisements funded by parties the candidates belong to or other supporters of candidates. It was noticed during the monitoring period for this report that there was widespread broadcasting and publishing of paid advertisements in support of the National Democratic Party (NDP) on government television channels and in national newspapers. This undermines equal opportunity for competing candidates and parties in general.

Journalists in Egypt were subjected to harassment that prevented them from carrying out their professional duties. Cases of harassment of Egyptian and foreign journalists increased during their coverage of the parliamentary elections. These cases are documented by the international and Egyptian human rights groups.

It was observed that state-owned newspapers funded by public monies were flagrantly biased in favor to the NDP. Moreover, they were eager to allocate the first half of their front pages to coverage of the NDP candidates' election campaigns and the accomplishments of the government and President Mubarak. They did so repeatedly and continuously, in addition to favorably following the policies and decisions taken by the government and the NDP. In fact, such favorable coverage of policies and decisions taken by the government appeared inseparable from the election campaigns of NDP candidates and offered support to them in their challenge to competing candidates. These papers also prominently displayed the NDP and its candidates on their inner pages by allocating conspicuous and wide spaces, large headlines and pictures of all sizes, often in color. These items covered election conferences held by the NDP and its candidates' campaigns in addition to ministers and prominent officials in the NDP and government. This was done in a manner that revealed a clear discrepancy between the media coverage of NDP candidates and the remaining political currents.

A number of the state owned newspapers and magazines (Al-Ahram, Al-Gomhoria and Rose Al-Youssef newspapers and Rose Al-Youssef, October and Al-Mussawar magazines) adopted a negative and even aggressive approach towards the Muslim Brotherhood that overstepped the framework of enlightening readers. Rose Al-Youssef newspaper and magazine were the most aggressive towards the Muslim Brotherhood.

Despite the varied coverage in the state-owned TV channels – in terms of quantity – of the primary political currents that participated in the parliamentary elections, there was clear bias to the NDP in terms of the orientation and quality of coverage. The nature of the political struggle witnessed by these elections was reflected in television coverage in that the two largest competing powers, the NDP and the Muslim Brotherhood, received the greatest amount of television coverage although most of that concerning the latter was negative. The best picture presented was that in the performance of the local channels which are the least viewed.



## **INDEPENDENT COMMITTEE ON ELECTION MONITORING (ICEM)**

### **PRESS STATEMENT PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION**

***MONDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2005***

The Independent Committee for Election Monitoring (ICEM), a coalition of sixteen NGOs led by the Ibn Khaldun Center deployed a total of 5,000 observers to monitor the Electoral process for the Parliamentary Elections to provide for the integrity and the credibility of the election process.

ICEM findings reveal a continuous exacerbation of the numerous election violations throughout the process. This deterioration was mainly due to the significant and unanticipated inroads made by the Muslim Brotherhood over the course of the election rounds. By the end of the election, the levels of violence and harshly repressive tactics used by security reached a critical point. The number of fatalities, injuries, and arrests accumulated throughout the month, reaching its apex in the run-off of the final round where twelve people were killed. In addition to the violence and arrests, the electoral process was marred by other serious and widespread violations that contributed to the withering credibility and integrity of the election. These violations include vote-buying, voter-intimidation, illegal campaigning, ballot-stuffing, counting irregularities, and inaccuracies with voter lists.

#### **Conclusions**

On many levels, this Parliamentary Election has not sufficiently met the standard criteria that would constitute a democratic process, that is, it has neither been free, fair, nor transparent.

- ***Authorities Failed to Ensure a Free Election***

Much of the election's irregularities and misconduct were clearly pre-planned and directed towards obstructing voters as they attempted to cast their ballots. By the end, police forces had transitioned from a policy of non-interference, to targeting opposition voters, to lashing out at people in general and preventing whole villages

from going to the polls. ICEM is seriously questioning why Egypt even held elections given that the government was so adamant about preventing voters from casting their votes.

- ***Authorities' Bias Undermined the Fairness of the Election***

ICEM views that the continuous and systematic interference of police forces in the election on behalf of the ruling party is a flagrant violation of the principles governing a free and fair election and discredited the whole process. ICEM also believes that the role of the security forces should have been limited to ensuring the safety of the voting process and not interfering in favor of or against any of the parties involved.

- ***Authorities Failed to Establish Transparent Processes***

Authorities on the ground have regularly decided to be uncooperative with domestic monitors in direct violation of the court ruling. ICEM believes that it has been pointless for the government to announce that it would allow domestic monitoring when in fact it has regularly used various means (obstructing access, intimidation, and organized violence) to eliminate any meaningful monitoring activity. Because observers and candidate poll-watchers have by and large been denied access to monitor the counting process, ICEM concludes that the government and responsible authorities have fallen well short of their previously stated commitments to establish a fair and transparent election.

ICEM was initially hopeful concerning the instruction from the Minister of Justice stating that the totals from each ballot box should be announced separately in an effort to enhance the transparency and credibility of the election results and, especially, that of the counting process. However, the majority of election authorities at every level ignored the clearly stated directive.

- ***Authorities Fail to Effectively Include Citizens***

The voter turnout estimates for the six election days were as follows: 34%, 25%, 17%, 18%, 18%, and 8%. ICEM believes that the dramatic drop in voter turn-out is largely due to the escalation of violence as well as the organized attempts to prevent citizens from casting their votes. This situation was especially grave in the last run-off phase where police forces intervened massively to prevent voters from approaching the polling places and responded to subsequent protests with excessive and deadly force.

Also, election administration authorities intentionally failed to clarify the electoral process for voters. As such, the election was conducted in an environment of general confusion about the process and the responsibilities of the election administration, courts and government. To this regard, the election administration failed to conduct any meaningful voter education initiatives. The voter apathy characterizing the election is a major concern. Democracy strives on the principles of citizen participation.