



International Observation Mission for National Parliamentary Elections in Afghanistan

Situation

The US-based group Democracy International deployed the largest international observation mission for the September 2010 national parliamentary elections. Conditions varied dramatically across the country although security was of paramount concern most everywhere.

Approach

Observers met in Kabul for education and training before being dispatched to different regions. We received cultural, political and security briefings. Great effort was spent to liaise with domestic observer

groups so that together we might cover the whole country. We nearly did, except for areas where owing to the tough terrain no vehicles, not even helicopters, could get in and out. Voting materials in certain areas were transported via donkey.

Results

There were fewer systematic problems as compared with the prior election but corruption was evident. Plus some voters stayed home for fear of the Taliban, who threatened to cut off voters' fingers. Democracy is still percolating in Afghanistan. On the other hand, and in spite of the persistent influence and arguably growing power of the Taliban, there was nevertheless a fairly recent peaceful transfer of power following the latest, albeit once again contested, presidential election. This is no small achievement. While I was in country I spent an eye opening if brief time in Tarin Kowt, capital of Oruzgan Province, a remote area in the southern part of the country. Tarin Kowt has a population of roughly 10,000, with maybe 200 shops in the main bazaar...where you can find the best tomatoes on earth.

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