FACTSHEET

2014 Council of Representative Elections - Votes Counting and Aggregation

The next important step in the electoral process after polls are closed is counting and aggregation of votes. There is a minor variation between the counting procedures for the regular voting and that of the special voting. This document first presents the process of counting for regular voting followed by the counting process for special voting.

A. Counting of Ballots for Regular Voting

Where will ballots of regular voters be counted?

Ballots of regular voters will first be counted at the polling stations upon closure of polls on 30 April.

What is the counting process at the polling station?

Before commencing counting, reconciliation of the ballots will be done by completing form 801. This is done to ensure proper accounting for the ballots allocated to the polling station.

Once ballot reconciliation is completed, sorting and counting of ballots will be conducted. Valid ballots are first sorted according to Political Entities (PEs) and then further sorted per candidates on the PE list. After sorting, votes obtained by each PE as well as each candidate are counted and recorded in the results form 802. Polling staff will write their names and telephone numbers on the results form and sign. PE agents are permitted to countersign at the back of the first copy of the results form if they wish to do so.

Polling Station Manager then announces the results to the people present and post a copy at the polling station. Copies of the results are also given to PE agents. All these processes are done in the presence of PE agents and observers.

Will there be a recount of ballots?

Article 38 of the CoR Elections Law 2013 enjoins IHEC to open branch sorting and counting centres (sub-centres) to recount all ballots from polling stations. Consequently, IHEC will open sub-centres in all governorates to recount ballots from polling stations.

What are the processes at the Branch Sorting and Counting Centres (Sub-centres)?

The first stage of the process is intake, storage and archiving. The intake team will receive all sensitive polling materials per polling centre (PC) with all its stations and check them. When discrepancies are noticed during intake, the box is sent to the quarantine area for auditing. Where there are no discrepancies, the box is sent to the storage and archiving area. Here, all materials of a PC are stored together in one area for easy retrieval.

Second stage: Reconciliation, sorting and counting of ballots independent of the polling station (PS) count is conducted. Actual counting however follows the same steps as at the PS. When counting is finished, the sub-centre reconciliation and results forms 803 and 804
respectively, are completed by the team. Each team in this section works on one PS at a time.

**Third stage:** Here a separate reconciliation team will match the PS reconciliation and result forms (Forms 801 and 802) with the sub-centre reconciliation and result forms (Forms 803 and 804). A maximum discrepancy level of 4% is tolerated. But when discrepancy is beyond the tolerant level, the materials of the PS will be quarantines for further investigations.

**Forth stage:** This is the stage where auditing of boxes in quarantine area is conducted. Materials and forms of the PS are checked by the audit team who will have to prescribe possible solution to the discrepancies based on their findings.

Completed result forms (804) are submitted to the Sub-Centre manager who announces the results to the people present and gives copies to PE agents. Results are then sent to the Data Entry Centre (DEC) of the IHEC NO in Baghdad for tabulation.

*Are Election Observers allowed in the Branch Sorting and Counting Centres (Sub-Centres)?* Accredited election observers, PE agents and media are allowed access to the branch sorting and counting centres to observe the process.

*How are the elections results aggregated at the DEC?* For the aggregation of the election results, the centre will use program designed by IHEC database development staff in close collaboration with UN Advisors.

*Who can access the DEC?* For security purpose, access to the DEC network is limited to IHEC Team, which analyses detailed data and reports on the performance of the infrastructure, technology status, progress, and technical challenges.

*How does the Data Entry Process ensure accuracy?* For the highest level of accuracy and efficiency, the results forms go through a double blind data entry process in four stages.

**First stage:** Each of the results forms received from the sub-centres and the GEO count centres is entered twice by two different operators in a database using the aggregation program.

**Second stage:** The two entries are electronically compared (by the program) and in case of discrepancy, the forms are flagged for arbitration by a third operator and corrected.

**Third stage:** When both entries match, the form is sent for visual verification by a fourth operator and then archived. In case of mistake, the form is resent to the first operator for data entry and follows the same process.

**Forth stage:** Archived forms are randomly selected for auditing and quality control to confirm that the data entered is accurate.
Throughout the data entry process, any problematic form or any discrepancy in the number of votes cast is dealt with by a dedicated team of Auditors. Example is a case whereby the number of ballots cast in a particular station is greater than the number of voters in that station.

Progress reports during the data entry process are displayed on monitors in the observation room. Observers are also able to monitor what is happening in any of data entry halls.

**Is the DEC in charge of seat allocation?**

The DEC is not in charge of the seat allocation process, which devolves to a different committee. However, in practice, the DEC supports the seat allocations process with statistics from the result database.

**B. Counting of Ballots for Special Voting**

**Where will the special voting ballots be counted?**

Counting of ballots cast by various categories of special voters will take place at the count centres of the Governorate Electoral Offices (GEOs) and not at the polling stations. Special voters comprise personnel from the ISF and IP, IDPs, patients/personnel of hospitals, inmates and staff of detainee centres and prisons. There will be one count centre in every GEO for counting of ballots of special voting.

**Are the procedures that apply for the count of ballots at regular polling stations on 30 April the same as those for the count at the GEO Count Centres?**

The count itself follows the same procedures. Prior to the actual vote count however, the special voting and absentee ballots will be submitted to subsequent reconciliation, verification and batching.

- **Reconciliation:** Special voting and absentee ballots cast on 28 April are reconciled at the polling stations using reconciliation form 800 following the close of polls. At the count centre therefore, the cast ballots are reconciled with;
  1. the number of signatures on respective voter lists, and
  2. the number of ballots issued.
- **Verification:** Relevant data recorded on the conditional ballot envelopes cast by some special voter categories (hospitals, detention centres and prisons) as well as signatures in the voter lists will be verified using the Iraq wide voter registry. Data verification will enable the rejection of ballots cast by non-eligible and/or multiple voters.
- **Batching:** To safeguard voter secrecy and fasten the count, ballots from different absentee and special voting stations are batched together according to strict criteria set out in the count centre procedures. Batching may only start following the end of the period reserved for the investigation of complaints that might have been submitted with regard to any absentee and/or special voting station.

Both reconciliation and verification will start on 28 April immediately following the special voting day, as these processes are time consuming. No actual count will however take place at the count centre before the end of polling on the regular Election Day on 30 April.
**Are the count centres accessible for observation?**
The processes at the count centres at the GEOs form an integral part of the entire electoral process, and may therefore be observed by accredited observers, political entity agents and media.

**Are the results produced at the GEO count centres made public?**
In order to ensure maximum transparency, the count centre manager will see to it that copies of produced Batch Results Forms are displayed and available at the count centre for the attention of observers, political entity agents and media for their perusal.

**Are results from GEO count centres sent to the sub-centres for recount?**
Special voting results do not go to the sub-centres for recount. The original Batch Results Forms are transported to the Data Entry Centre located at the IHEC National Office in Baghdad for tabulation.

**Where can additional information be obtained?**
For additional information on the Data Entry Centre and other topics related to the 2014 CoR Elections please refer to the IHEC website [www.ihec.iq](http://www.ihec.iq).