

**FREE AND FAIR ELECTION NETWORK**

**Observation and Analysis of PP-100 By-Election**

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| **PP-100: By-Election Held Amidst Procedural Irregularities and Unlawful Campaigning** |

**Islamabad, July 27, 2015:** By-election in PP-100 (Gujranwala-X) witnessed procedural irregularities and unlawful campaigning on Sunday, says Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) in its preliminary report.

The seat fell vacant following the murder of PML-N’s MPA Rana Shamshad Ahmad who was gunned down almost two months ago. In the 2013 general elections, PML-N’s Rana Shamshad won securing 54,518 votes while Yasir Arafat Ramay of the PTI was the runner up, bagging 14,618 votes.

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) set up 113 polling stations in total which include 38 male, 36 female and 39 combined polling stations. The total number of registered voters was 162, 444 making a proportion of95, 750 male and 66,694 female constituents. The 113 polling stations had 196 male and 148 female polling booths.

FAFEN deployed a total of 28 trained, non-partisan observers to observe the election process at all the polling stations in the constituency. The observers spent around 45 to 60 minutes at each polling station to observe the election process and document their findings on a standardized checklist based on the provisions of the Representation of the People Act 1976, Conduct of Elections Rules 1977 and instructional handbooks provided to the election officials by the ECP. This report is based on the observation from 48 polling stations (19 male, 20 female and nine combined).

The election staff was largely cooperative as there was only one instance where a FAFEN observer was not allowed to observe the election process.

According to FAFEN’s initial observation, police officials were present inside 46 polling stations out of a total of 48 from where the observers reported their findings till mid-day. Under electoral rules, even at sensitive polling stations, police or other security personnel are only authorized to maintain order outside the polling stations to ensure orderly voting process. The security officials can only enter polling stations or booths when requested by the presiding officer. FAFEN observers reported one instance (at PS-38) where an armed civilian was seen inside the polling booth. A lone incidence of violence was also reported from a female polling station (PS-53).

FAFEN observers also reported from 19 polling stations that the supporters of contesting candidates were campaigning and canvassing within 400 yards of polling stations which is a violation of election laws. The observers also reported the presence of armed civilians at two such party camps. Such display of arms inhibits voters from turning out to vote as well as compels them to vote under pressure.

Unauthorized persons such as voters who had already casted their votes were seen present inside 10 polling stations. At another 18 polling stations, unauthorized persons bearing party symbols or badges were present inside the polling booths while in one polling station each, local influential persons and provincial minister were seen. Similarly, there were six polling stations where government officials apart from the election officials were present without prior authorization.

FAFEN observers also reported eight instances where the election staff had filled the counterfoils in the ballot books with voter information in advance. On another five polling stations, polling staff was seen issuing ballot without filling the counterfoil with the required voter information.

At five polling stations, polling officials were seen preferring certain selected voters over others in the queue. Furthermore, at 37 polling stations, persons including security officials, local influential, political workers and government officials were seen persuading voters to cast the vote for a particular candidate or party.

**Recommendations**

1. Security officials should not be deputed inside polling stations instead they should be instructed to allow local as well as international election observers to carry out their observation in a manner which ensures transparency in voting process.
2. The ECP should make sure that all unauthorized personnel, campaign materials and party camps are removed from inside and around the polling stations.
3. The ECP should focus on conducting useful training sessions and work towards sensitization of the polling staff regarding significance of filling the counterfoils at the time of ballot issuance to the voter. There should be mechanisms in place where polling staff should be held responsible for any kind of incompliance of the same.