



OBSERVATION REPORT

NA-245 Karachi East-IV

Low turnout overshadows an otherwise peaceful and well-managed election

A clear lack of voter interest and participation in the by-election for Karachi's National Assembly (NA) constituency NA-245 Karachi East-IV eclipsed the peaceful and well-managed election for the constituency. Election for the multi-ethnic constituency was held on August 21, 2022, after the seat fell vacant due to the demise of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) Dr. Aamir Liaquat Hussain, who had won the General Election in 2018 (GE-2018). The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) had scheduled the by-election on July 27, 2022; however, it had to be postponed due to heavy rains in the metropolis. With a voter turnout of only 11.8 percent, the candidates and political parties were not successful in utilizing the additional time to mobilize most of the voters (88 percent) to cast their votes.

According to the ECP, the constituency had 515,003 registered voters (including 274,987 men and 240,016 women), which was an increase of 16.1 percent compared to GE-2018. The ECP established 263 polling stations (including 18 male, 18 female, and 227 combined), which was a 15 percent increase from GE-2018. To cater to potential security risks, all 263 polling stations were declared as 'sensitive' (60) or 'highly sensitive' (203) by the ECP. Accordingly, Pakistan Rangers were deployed for maintaining security (with the Pakistan Army on standby).

The Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) deployed 11 election-day observers (including eight men and three women), all of which were allowed to conduct observation of the required processes. These independent, trained, and accredited observers carried out the observation at 42 polling stations (including one female, two male, and 39 combined) and reported smooth conduct of the polling with no untoward incident.

CONSTITUENCY HIGHLIGHTS ...



REGISTERED VOTERS

GENERAL ELECTION 2018

MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
239,893	203,647	443,540

BY-ELECTION 2022

MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
274,987	240,016	515,003

CHANGE IN REGISTERED VOTERS (Since GE-2018)

MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
14.6% ⁺	17.9% ⁺	16.1% ⁺

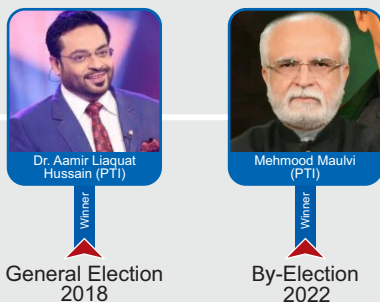
POLLING STATIONS (PS)

MALE PS	FEMALE PS	COMBINED PS
18	18	227

POLLING BOOTHS (PB)

MALE PB	FEMALE PB	TOTAL PB
526	526	1052

TIMELINE OF ELECTIONS



Turnout

The 11.8 percent voter turnout was significantly lower than the 37.6 percent turnout in the constituency during GE-2018. This voting rate is reflective of the usual trend of low turnout in by-elections. The recent by-election in National Assembly constituencies NA-240 Korangi Karachi-II in June 2022 and NA-33 Hangu in April 2022 registered eight percent and 14 percent turnouts, respectively. Women's turnout in the by-election was 8.2 percent, which was a 74 percent decrease from their turnout in GE-2018 (31.8 percent).

Contesting Candidates

During GE-2018, nine political parties and six independent candidates contested for the NA-245 seat, out of which the PTI contender Dr. Aamir Liaquat Hussain emerged victorious with a margin of victory of over 21,000 votes.

During the recent by-election, candidates from nine political parties along with eight independent candidates contested for the seat. While Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPP) and Jamiat Ulma-e-Islam Fazal (JUI-F) – coalition partners in the federal government – withdrew their candidates in support of Muttahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan (MQM-P), MQM's founding leader Altaf Hussain had called for a boycott of the election.

The table below provides details of the 17 contesting candidates.

#	Name of Candidate	Gender	Party
1	Mahmoood Baqi Maulvi	Male	Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf
2	Moeed Anwer	Male	Muttahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan (MQM-P)
3	Syed Hafeez Uddin	Male	Pak Sarzameen Party (PSP)
4	Aamir Zia	Male	Aam Log Ittehad Party
5	Muhammad Ahmed Khan	Male	Pakistan Muslim Alliance
6	Muhammad Ahmed Raza	Male	Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP)
7	Muhammad Shahid	Male	Mohajir Qaumi Movement Pakistan
8	Muhammad Danish Khan	Male	Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians ¹
9	Aminullah	Male	Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam Pakistan ²

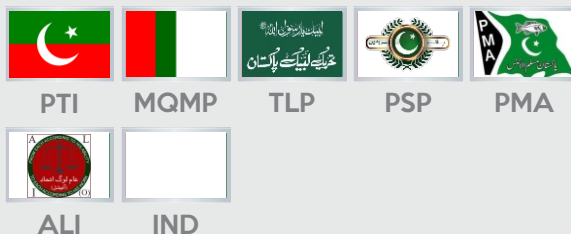
¹ Candidate withdrew in favor of MQM-P.

² Ibid.

CONSTITUENCY HIGHLIGHTS ...

MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES

As many as 17 candidates including representatives of PSP, ALI, PMA, TLP, MQMP, PTI, MQM and eight contested as independent in the by-election.



TOTAL CONTESTING CANDIDATES

GENERAL ELECTION 2018		
MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL
14	1	15
BY-ELECTION 2022		
MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL
16	1	17

POLLING PERSONNEL

PRESIDING OFFICERS	263
ASSISTANT PRESIDING OFFICERS	526
POLLING OFFICERS	526

FAFEN OBSERVERS DEPLOYED

MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL
8	3	11

ELECTION HISTORY

REASON OF BY-ELECTION

The seat had fallen vacant after the death of MNA Dr. Aamir Liaquat Hussain Member (PTI).

GENERAL ELECTION 2018

VALID VOTES	VOTES EXCLUDED FROM THE COUNT	VOTER TURNOUT
166,868	2,881	37.62%

BY-ELECTION 2022

VALID VOTES	VOTES EXCLUDED FROM THE COUNT	VOTER TURNOUT
60,760	424	11.8%

#	Name of Candidate	Gender	Party
10	Hassan Sabir	Male	Independent
11	Sarmad Siddiqui	Male	Independent
12	Farrukh Niaz Tanoli	Male	Independent
13	Qamar Ahmed Khan	Male	Independent
14	Kiran Masood	Female	Independent
15	Muhammad Riaz	Male	Independent
16	Muhammad Shahrukh	Male	Independent
17	Dr. Muhammad Farooq Sattar	Male	Independent

Of the 17 candidates, only one was a woman who contested as an independent. In the GE-2018, the only women candidate was fielded by the Awami National Party. This demonstrates a trend of low political participation of women in the constituency. Political parties would be well-served to look into the issue and promote the active participation of women not only as voters but also as candidates.

Observation Scope

FAFEN deployed 11 election-day observers—eight men and three women—to observe the opening, voting, and counting processes. The observers were trained on documenting their observations using a standardized checklist based on the Elections Act, 2017, the Election Rules 2017, and the ECP's codes of conduct for the relevant stakeholders including contesting candidates and political parties, security officials, and observers. Each observer was assigned four polling stations in which they observed the processes preceding the start of polling, voting processes, the closing of poll, and counting processes.

This report is based on the observations received on election day from 42 polling stations—one female, two male, and 39 combined polling stations—obtained by FAFEN observers through a specially-established call center. The data, once received, was cleaned and where necessary, verified, before being subjected to analysis. The opening process was observed at 11 polling stations, the polling process at 42 polling stations, and the closing process at 10 polling stations.

1. Opening of Polling Process

According to FAFEN observers, at all the observed polling stations, polling was open for the voters at 8:00 am and the polling staff was ready to start the voting process. Polling agents were present at as many as eight (72.7 percent) of the observed polling stations. Empty ballot boxes were shown to all the polling agents present prior to the start of polling, and no

polling agent raised any objection to the pre-poll proceedings at the observed polling stations.

2. Polling Process

In comparison to GE-2018, there was a 16.1 percent increase in the number of registered voters in this by-election. Consequently, the ECP established 15 percent more polling stations in the constituency to accommodate them. The ECP had set up 263 polling stations comprising 1,052 polling booths. At 251 (95.4 percent) of these polling stations, the number of registered voters was more than the legally allowed limit of 1,200 voters as per Section 59 (3) of the Elections Act, 2017.

The polling process remained completely organized and smooth with adequate security arrangements made by the ECP. There was only one instance of a verbal altercation between voters at one of the observed polling stations.

According to the observers, the critical election materials, including ballot books, electoral rolls, official stamps, and ink were available in adequate quantities at all of the observed polling stations. Moreover, the law requires the establishment of polling booths in separate rooms. This was complied with at eight (19 percent) of the total observed polling stations.

Secrecy screens were properly installed at all of the observed polling stations, ensuring the complete secrecy of the voters' casting of votes. Moreover, no unauthorized individuals were observed to accompany the voters behind the secrecy screens.

At one of the polling stations, one polling agent signed Form-45 (Result of the Count) before the polling process concluded.

3. Environment

Candidates are not allowed to place electoral campaign material outside the polling stations. The ECP, which is responsible for ensuring that parties and candidates comply with electoral rules, worked effectively to curb campaign violations; consequently, at 12 (28.6 percent) of the observed polling stations, campaign material was seen to be placed at a conspicuous place outside the polling stations.

The role of security personnel is critical to maintaining peace and ensuring that all voters get equal access regardless of their gender, disabilities, or status, as required in the election law. As per the observation reports, security personnel were

deployed at all the observed polling stations and were observed to be giving priority facilitation to persons with disabilities (PWD), senior citizens, transgender persons, pregnant women, and mothers carrying infants. However, wheelchair ramps were observed to be available at only three (7.1 percent) of the observed polling stations, hindering equal accessibility for PWDs and even dissuading them where there was no such facility.

Enforcement of some other rules and regulations was also observed to be lax. For example, the code of conduct prohibits the establishment of party camps within 100 meters of polling stations, but at 24 (57.1 percent) of the observed polling stations, party camps violated the minimum distance limit and were set up immediately outside. Furthermore, candidates are also bound to not extend favors to voters on election day, but at nine (28.1 percent) of the observed polling stations, candidates were provided transportation facilities to their voters. However, polling proceeded smoothly with no incidence of violence observed outside the polling stations.

4. Counting Process

FAFEN observers conducted a detailed observation of the counting process at 10 polling stations and found the process to be 'largely compliant' with the relevant legal and procedural requirements. As per the observers' findings, at all the observed polling stations, the central door of the polling station was closed at 5:00 pm, and if there were any voters present inside at the time, they were observed to be allowed to cast their vote. Moreover, polling agents were allowed to observe the counting process at all the observed polling stations and were seated in a space where they could easily observe the entire process.

The Elections Act, 2017, and relevant rules require polling staff to provide copies of Form-45 to polling agents and observers as well as affix a copy outside the polling station. This is done to ensure the transparency of the results. At nine (90 percent) of the

observed polling stations, FAFEN observers reported that copies of Form-45 were given to the polling agents. At eight (80 percent) of the observed polling stations, FAFEN observers also received a copy of Form-45. Moreover, at five (62.5 percent) of the eight observed polling stations, a copy of Form-45 was pasted on the walls of the respective polling stations. At only one (10 percent) of the observed polling stations, unauthorized individuals were reported to be touching/counting the ballot papers. Finally, at all nine observed polling stations, the candidates/polling agents present during the process of counting signed the Form-45.

5. Results

PTI's candidate won with 29,475 (48.5 percent) votes, MQM-P's candidate was the runner-up with 13,193 (21.7 percent) votes, followed by the TLP candidate, who secured 9,836 (16.2 percent) votes. The placement followed a similar pattern from GE-2018, when PTI obtained 34 percent, MQM-P obtained 21.2 percent, and TLP obtained 12.4 percent of the votes; in this by-election. Interestingly, MQM-P's candidate Dr. Farooq Sattar won 21.2 percent of the votes in GE-2018 but in the current election, he obtained only 5.7 percent of the vote as an independent candidate. From these results, it may be deduced that electoral sympathies in NA-245 are party-based.

The election result compilation reflects minor discrepancies that may require the attention of the ECP. Whilst the total number as well as the numbers of valid and excluded votes polled were consistent across Forms-47, 48, and 49, the number for individual candidates varied. The variation is insignificant as it did not have any impact on the contest itself but may be assessed with a view to avoiding mistakes in any future election.

Despite increasing political frictions between the ruling coalition and PTI, no objections were raised to the outcome of the NA-245 by-election, presumably because of the convincing margin of victory.