



## Center for Strategic & Regional Studies

Kabul

### **Weekly Analysis-Issue Number 292 (March 9-16, 2019)**

Weekly Analysis is one of CSRS' publications, which significantly analyses weekly economic and political events in Afghanistan and the region. The prime motive behind this is to provide strategic insights and policy solutions to decision-making institutions and individuals in order to help them to design best policies. Weekly Analysis is published in local languages (Pashto and Dari) and international languages (English and Arabic).

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## Preface

The electoral law of Afghanistan was reformed and the members of the election commission were dismissed based on President Ghani's decree last month. The new members for the election commissions have been appointed according to the new law after the reform and dismissal of ex-members.

New members for the commission are appointed in a period when the final results of 15 provinces are yet to be announced and the parliament was thus not inaugurated according to the specified schedule. The ex-members of the commission were dismissed for their poor management and new members were appointed so that the elections of districts and provincial counsels can be conducted efficiently.

The first part of CSRS weekly analysis discusses the reasons why the ex-members of the commission failed in their duties and how successful the management of the new members can be?

The second part of CSRS Weekly analysis has a discussion on the International women's day and the condition of women in Afghanistan. Afghanistan celebrates the women's day alongside with other countries. Although the government officials shout out the slogans of anti-violence against women, but women in Afghanistan still face difficulties and even deprived from basic human and Islamic right in some areas.

## New election commissions and the fate of the future elections



As result of consistent demands of political parties, elections supervisors and international community for amendment of electoral law and reformation in election commissions, the final draft of new electoral law was submitted to the cabinet by joint committee of political parties, representatives of candidates and election supervisors around a month ago and approved by the cabinet on 12<sup>th</sup> February, 2019 which was later indorsed by the president of Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, all members of Election commission were dismissed based on the president' decree and later banned from travelling abroad by the attorney general. After the dismissal of the members of election commissions, new members were appointed for the commission and officially begin their duties on 4<sup>th</sup> March, 2019.

Here, we discuss the effects of new changes in electoral system and the fate of elections of 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2019.

## **Former members of election commissions**

The ex-members of election commission who were recently fired and later banned from travelling by the attorney general, were appointed at the beginning of December, 2016.

According to the previous electoral law, the former members were interviewed and selected by the president and chief executive, after being shortlisted among 36 candidates by the selection committee.

Among the selected members, 7 of them (Maliha Hassan, Najibullah Ahmadzai, Abdulqadir Qauraishi and Wasima Badghesi for five years and Gulajan Sayad, Rafiullah Baidar, Maazullah Dawlati for three years) were select as the members of election commission and five (Ali Raza Rohani, Abdul Basir Faiz for Ghulam Dastageer Hedayat five year and Hamira Haqmal and Abdulaziz Aryaee for three years) were selected as the members of electoral complaints commission.

Although President Ghani during the oath and introduction ceremony emphasized on government's support from election commissions and their independence, but corruption and weak management were reported after one year and Imam Mohammad Wareemaj, director of independent commissions' secretariat was dismissed by the president for his poor management.

A few days after Wareemaj's dismissal, Najibullah Ahmadzai, director of Independent election commission was fired by the president due to conflicts among the members of IEC. Although Mr. Ahmadzai claimed that his dismissal was illegal and said that some groups related to the presidential palace strives to control the commission, but the president's office proclaimed that his dismissal was according to the decision and demand of IEC.

Overall due to internal dissensions in election commissions, absence of cooperation between election commission and electoral complaints commission, presence of corruption and internal and external interferences in commissions, none of the members completed their specified period of job and were finally dismissed with the amendment of electoral law.

## Capacity of New commissions

The new members of election commissions were selected through votes of 18 candidates of presidential elections and later introduced to election commissions by president Ghani. They conducted their first internal meeting on 5 March, 2019 and selected leaders for both commissions after internal elections.

Among the new members, Hawa Alam Nooristani was appointed as the chairwoman, Said Asmatullah Mal as the deputy and Musafar Qoqandi as the secretary of Independent election commission. In addition, Zuhra Bayan Shinwarai was chosen as the chairwoman, Mawlawi Din Mohammad Azimi as the deputy and Mohammad Qasim Illyasi was chosen as the secretary of Independent electoral complaints commission. Moreover, president Ghani appointed as the chairman of IEC secretariat and Chaman Shah Etemadi as the chairman of IECC secretariat.

The government to some extent was able to please and gain the trust of political parties, supervisors and candidates by giving them a role in selecting IEC members. Since the candidates of presidential elections were involved in the amendment of electoral law and selection of the members, this will help Ghani not to be blamed and criticized for any occurrence of technical and managerial weaknesses in the commissions. Overall however, there are still concerns regarding the capacity and management of election commission by the new members.

The new commissioners begin their duty when women were selected as the chairpersons of both commissions. Although supervisory establishments consider the members election transparent but are concerned about their capacity. Most of the new members have obtained bachelor degree and do not have enough experience in elections management.

## **Fate of the upcoming elections**

According to the recent schedule announced by IEC, the presidential elections, provincial and district councils and parliamentary elections of Ghazni will be conducted on 7<sup>th</sup> July, 2019. However the question is, will the elections be conducted according to the schedule?

Overall, it can be said that the fate of elections is firstly connected with the political and security condition of the country, and secondly related to facilities, capacity and performance of election commissions.

**Political and security condition:** Overall, the hostile behavior of Afghan government towards the US-Taliban negotiations and political and security condition are critical. Although the initiation of peace negotiation between the Taliban the United States has increased hopes for the end of war in Afghanistan, but the unfriendliness of Afghan government towards the negotiations, rise of airstrikes of Joint forces on residential and religious places have increased concerns about the upcoming condition of Afghanistan.

The dissension between the government and politicians regarding the peace negotiation process is another issue concerning the future of politics in the country. The politicians blame the government for the monopoly of power and holds the government liable for provoking war by disagreeing with the peace process.

Considering these issues, it can be said that the fate of the upcoming elections depends on the results of the peace negotiations. If the Taliban and the U.S. truly reaches a conclusion and sign an agreement, the election may delayed once again for a longer time.

**Capacity of New commissions:** If the government conducts election in the current circumstances, then the transparency and management of the new members will be criticized or praised. Since the members of commissions are selected by the political parties, it is perceived that the candidates will mentally pressure the members and affect their duty and transparency of the elections. Moreover, since the members of commission do not have sufficient experience of elections, it is less likely for elections to happen according to the specified schedule.

In addition, budget and security condition are other issues that can affect the upcoming elections and Afghanistan is facing serious complications caused by these issues. From one side almost half of the region is out of government's control, on the other hand Afghanistan hasn't obtained any final assurance by the international community to fund the elections. The End.

## International women's day and the condition of women in Afghanistan



8<sup>th</sup> March is declared International women's day. This day is celebrated by many countries annually. Afghanistan is also among the countries where the day is enthusiastically celebrated by the government officials and other institutions to support women.

The day was celebrated this year in a period when UNAMA's annual report has revealed that 1,152 women were killed and wounded during 2018. Besides war, poverty, drug addiction, illiteracy, violence and other issues which have made women's lives difficult in Afghanistan.

There are many establishments who operates to support women. However, most of them are project based and functions within a limited circle. In addition, women in villages and rural town still lives deprived of basic necessities and in a difficult condition

Here, we illustrate the true image of women's condition, violence against women and causes of violence in Afghanistan.



## **Women's role in the structure of Afghan government**

According to the CSO's Department of social and demographic statistics, the population of Afghanistan in 2017 was 29.7 Million, among who, 14.5 Million were women.

Struggles for the betterment of women initiated after the establishment of government in 2001. The government opened the doors of schools and universities for girls and increased their recruitment throughout time.

According to the ministry of education, 9 million and 389 thousands of students were studying in schools in 2017. Among these students, three million and 564 thousand were girls. In addition, based on information published by the central statistics organization, including 91826 women, 369317 students were studying in private and public universities in 2017

According to the ministry of foreign affairs, Afghan embassies at the United States, Tajikistan, Switzerland, and Norway are led by women. Moreover, three ministries of the cabinet are ran by women and 10 women are deputies in various ministries. The leadership of two commissions is also given to women. The portion of women in the fifth round of Parliament was high compared to some countries including France, India, Russia, Japan, and Pakistan.

## **Condition of women in Afghanistan**

Afghanistan in a religious society where in some areas demand of inheritance by women is still considered vice. This example clearly indicates the level of illiteracy and deprivation from natural and Islamic rights in Afghanistan.

In order to improve women condition in Afghanistan, the Afghanistan establish a special ministry for women's affairs. Dozens of societies operates to support women and the International community spends millions of dollars for the betterment of women in Afghanistan. In addition, new laws were sanctioned for human rights and support of women. Besides all these however, Afghan women still face difficulties and violence.

According to Afghanistan Independent human rights commission, 5132 incidents of violence against women were recorded in 2015. In addition a horrific incident of Farkhunda occurred near the presidential palace during 2015 Farkhunda was publicly beaten, killed, driven over, and burned due to blame of disrespecting the Qur'an. The violence cases increased and jumped to 5575 in 2016. However, the number of violence incidents reduced to 4340 in 2017. These violence cases were recorded in cities and region under government's control. As almost half of the region is under militants' control, the condition of women is unknown in those areas.

Most of the funds to support women are spent in cities, while 21.1 million of population lives in villages and rural areas. On the other hand, women in cities are stepping away from and have extreme views about our Islamic and national values by using the names of "democracy" and "freedom of speech". Women in cities are facing sexual assaults under the shades of democracy and freedom of speech. According to "PAYK Investigation journalism center", every four women out five are sexually abused in military units in Afghanistan

On the other hand, women in rural areas are deprived from their human and Islamic rights. marriages for resolving disputes, child marriages, domestic violence, deprivation from education, absence of health services, performing heavy works inside and outside the house and many other are obstacles that women in villages are facing and have negative effect on their lives.

## **Conclusion**

The four decade war in Afghanistan has negatively affected the condition of every Afghan including women. Thousands of women became widows and lost their sons, lost properties and wealth, and forced to perform heavy works or became baggers to find a piece of bread and food for themselves and their children.

Besides, people in Afghan society are still unfamiliar with the rights of women in Islam. Illiteracy, effects of foreign cultures, corruption, disrespect for the law and many others are issues which has increased violence incidents in Afghanistan.

In order to reduce violence against women in Afghanistan, it is necessary to honestly spend the funds donated to support women. The funds shouldn't be spent on blustering assemblies and useless projects. It is essential to upturn public awareness about the human and Islamic rights of women, punish the involved individuals in violence and facilitate basic human needs for women in rural areas.

The end

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**Contact Us:**

Email: [info@csrskabul.com](mailto:info@csrskabul.com) - [csrskabul@gmail.com](mailto:csrskabul@gmail.com)

Website: [www.csrskabul.com](http://www.csrskabul.com) - [www.csrskabul.net](http://www.csrskabul.net)

Office: **(+93) 202564049 - (+93) 784089590**



Researcher and Editor of Weekly Analysis: **Zia-ul-Islam Shirani**

Researcher and Distributor of Weekly Analysis: **Ahmad Shah Rashed**