



EU Election Observation Mission to Pakistan - preliminary statement on 25 July general elections

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EU Election Observation Mission
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Preliminary Statement
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Participation of Religious Minorities and other under-represented groups

Despite positive measures taken by ECP and civil society, minorities, persons with disabilities and transgender persons are still largely hampered from participating in the electoral process

Despite a 30 per cent increase in non-Muslim voters (3.63 million against 2.7 million in 2013), only 44 candidates contested the ten National Assembly seats for non-Muslims.⁶⁰ The system of allocating seats does not enable effective representation of non-Muslims if their elected representative is not linked to a constituency. Ahmadis are still registered on a separate electoral roll, a clear disenfranchisement of the 167,500 Ahmadi voters in an environment of widespread sectarian violence.⁶¹ Pakistan is yet to fulfil its international obligations regarding equality of electoral rights to all minority citizens.⁶²

Persons with disabilities face major obstacles participating in the elections. Of the 3.3 million persons with disabilities, only 165,927 are registered as voters. There are lengthy CNIC registration procedures, inadequate access to postal voting and difficulties in accessing polling stations. The ECP with the support of civil society organisations carried out an audit of polling premises and produced tailored voter information for persons with disabilities, including voter material in braille which was tested in 300 polling stations. Only three disabled candidates contested the elections. International standards related to persons with disabilities are not yet enshrined in domestic law.⁶³

Since May 2018, the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act has guaranteed transgender people the right to participate in the elections. However, they still face social stigma and significant financial obstacles to their full participation in the elections. Only four transgender candidates competed in the elections and faced fierce competition, as well as serious harassment.⁶⁴

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