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Women's electoral rights violated in KP

NGO demands ECP to declare election null and void in constituencies where women were barred from voting

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ISLAMABAD: Widespread violations of women's electoral rights in several districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were observed on election day where they were barred from voting forcibly through political party agreements or under threatening circumstances.

In Upper Dir, women were barred from voting in the entire district and only one woman was able to cast her vote in UC Darora. In Lower Dir women were stopped from voting in seven constituencies, and in Buner district women were not allowed to vote in 17 UCs. Women were also barred from

voting in several constituencies in Mardan, DI Khan, Nowshera, Batagram and Malakand.

The statistics were released by Aurat Foundation in its initial report on election monitoring. Over 100 women domestic election observers of Aurat Foundation monitored election activities from gender perspective throughout the day at 553 women polling stations in major cities of Pakistan in collaboration with international monitors of Gender Concerns International (GCI). Election monitoring was undertaken in Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar, Swabi, Kohat, Swat, Abbottabad, Mardan, Lower Dir, Hyderabad,

Thatta, Sargodha, Bhakkar, Vehari and Gujranwala.

Aurat Foundation called upon the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to declare elections null and void in these constituencies due to flagrant violation of election rules and code of ethics. The constituencies where women were stopped from, partially or fully, from casting vote en masse are: Upper Dir, Lower Dir, Kaman-garah, Bajwaro, Pato, Bankot, Sari, Ouch, Buner, Mardan, Kotki, Katlung, DI Khan, Garah Essa Khail, Nowshera, Choki Mumraiz, Batagaram,

Ajmera, Malakand, Dargai, Heroshah, Haryan Kot, etc.

The report terms women

voters' knowledge about vote-casting procedure as average in urban centres, however, in rural areas and in rural suburbs of cities women generally lacked information about voting. The ECP's SMS facility in vote tracking was benefitted by literate women voters, in cities, however, many voters even in cities and mostly in rural areas had to approach political party camps for getting polling booth's code number and serial number of vote.

It says that voting for General Elections 2013 remained peaceful and orderly by and large in the country except for a

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CEC praises Jang...

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ahead of others and especially mentioned the programmes of senior journalists Kamran Khan and Hamid Mir.

The ECP and Nadra in collaboration with the Jang Group launched mobile phone service for voters to know the names and places of their polling stations. Around 5.5 million people benefited from this service.

Election observers from the US, Japan, Commonwealth, the EU, Australia and Malaysia expressed their delight at the use of technology to facilitate the voters.