

Fragile security situation

# Poll mission not to visit FATA, Balochistan

15 international and 50 national observers to ascertain women's participation in the upcoming elections

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Due to security reasons, the Gender Election Monitoring (GEM) Mission has hinted not to go to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata) and most likely to Balochistan to monitor polls on election day.

The GEM Mission has deployed 15 international and 50 national observers to ascertain women's participation in the upcoming elections.

"I do like and want to observe general elections in Balochistan but our domestic observers have advised us against it because of security concerns," said Sabra Bano, head of the Mission and director of the Gender Concerns International (GCI) while talking to *The Express Tribune*.

Bano said that in Balochistan women face multiple forms of discrimination in terms of politics or as voters and this region should not be ignored.

"The GEM Mission has worked in conflict zones across the globe and monitoring polls in Balochistan should not be a problem for it," she said.

"For us all women in Pakistan are equal and we

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GEM Mission,  
**Caecilia J van Peski**

want to empower them by highlighting their issues they face either while contesting elections or casting votes. If the region was ignored just because of the security fear it would be injustice with the women there," she said.

"As compare to 80s and 90s there has been an improvement in women's participation in elections, which is a good sign," she said

Bano believes that upcoming elections were a ray of hope for every Pakistani despite fragile law and order situation in the country.

International Trainer, GEM Mission, Caecilia J van Peski said that it was for the first time that she had come to Pakistan to train local female observers to monitor elections from the gender perspective.

"Despite security and other issues, all these females are passionate about visiting polling stations in their respective areas which reflect that Pakistani women are strong and brave enough to face all sort of challenges," she said.