



Statement on Transgender Inclusion in General Election 2018 Pakistan

General Elections 2018 are significant in the country democratic history as it was 3rd time that Pakistan having a democratic transition uninterrupted. Election 2018 had experienced number of significant developments including Election Reforms Act 2017 and this act had a clear commitment for inclusive democratic process by ensuring right to vote for women, persons with disabilities, religious minorities and transgender people under its section 48.

Pre-Nomination Challenges for Transgender Candidates

As soon as date for general elections 2018 was announced by the Election Commission of Pakistan there was a great deal of excitement was evident among transgender citizens in Pakistan. There were more than 13 transgender across Pakistan who were quite keen to contest but they all quit from the process as soon as they learned about the nomination papers fee for contesting elections. It was a high fee structure than ever before reportedly PKR 20,000 for provincial assembly and PKR 30,000 for national assembly. Transgender potential candidates and Trans rights activists both utilized social media to call for fund raising to support transgender candidates to deposit their nomination fee. Social media messages regarding fund raising were very well received and many people from general public contributed in for nomination fee and also for election campaign support, many opted for support in kind such as printing banners, stickers, etc.

Transgender Candidates for Election 2018

Transgender rights movement in Pakistan has reached to a remarkable phase of visibly to recognition and general election 2018 are one of the best examples of this recognition. Despite all the challenges of high fee for contesting election 2018 there were 5 transgender candidates contesting from across Pakistan and their constituency details are as following;

S#	Name	Constituency	Status	Symbols	Votes¹
1	Nadeem Kashish	NA-53	Independent	Radio	22
2	Resham	NA-69	Independent	Bucket	305
3	Nayyab Ali	NA-142	PTI-Gulali	Racket	197
4	Lubna Lal	PP-26	PTI-Gulali	Racket	220
5	Maria Khan	PK-31	Independent	Sheep	536

¹ All these numbers are quoted from ECP website by consulting form-47

Transgender Voters for Election 2018

Pakistan has total number of registered voters 105,955,409² and out this total 46,731,146 are male and 59,224,263 are female voters and all the electoral rolls are available on ECP website without any mention of transgender registered voters. This is important to have mention or separate column for transgender registered voters since law recognize them as 3rd/separate gender. ECP was successful to establish a Gender and Disability Electoral working (GDEW) group to ensure an inclusive democratic process for 2018, and there was a number of transgender registered voters is shared 2000. There is no mention of transgender in GDEW but they are referred as “Other marginalized” groups and more focus in GDEW is on women electoral participation. ECP also introduced a separate column in form-XIV statement of count to enter the information about women voters for each polling station, this was indeed a commendable measure but there was no such attention paid to transgender citizens’ voter counting. National census has already undercounted transgender population and it shows only 10,418 and number of registered transgender voter is low as 2000 as per GDEW claims, however, ECP electoral rolls don’t have any mention of transgender in total registered voters, it only mention larger gender binary of male and female.

Transgender Election Day Observers for Election 2018

Another significant development towards trans inclusive democratic spaces was evident by deploying 125 transgender election day observers and 5 long term observers in selected regions across Pakistan. Details of transgender election day and long term observers are as following;

Election Day Observers		Long Term Observers	
Region	#Observers	Region	#observers
Islamabad	25	Islamabad	1
Lahore	25	Lahore	1
Karachi	25	Karachi	1
Peshawar	25	Peshawar	1
Quetta	25	Quetta	1

Key Challenges

Overall general election 2018 was a good example of trans inclusion in electoral process, however there were number of administrative challenges which if were resolved timely the level of transgender participation would have been different. Some of the key challenges are as following;

1. Lack of information among transgender citizens about their right to vote was a greater challenge to ensure their active participation in electoral process and to attain their motivation and interest in the process
2. There was no or not sufficient information/training and voter education for transgender citizen as how to cast vote, finding relevant polling booth etc.
3. Gender expression remained a barrier throughout for those who appeared to cast their votes as based on their outlook polling booth staff directed them to go to male booth but they wanted to cast their votes at female booth
4. None of the single political parties have mobilized transgender voters in their respective constituencies and their election campaigns.

² Source-Election Commission of Pakistan

5. There was a greater gap between ECP and transgender citizens on enrolling in electoral lists, no special or affirmative measures were taken to ensure maximum transgender citizen in electoral rolls
6. Majority of transgender citizens do not have their CNIC at all, NADRA and ECP could not facilitate to ensure speedy or through mobile vans to ensure transgender CNIC registrations before elections
7. There is a huge internal migration amongst transgender citizens, NADRA and ECP could not take measures to disseminate the information amongst transgender citizens and to encourage them to register or re-register their votes at their temporary residing areas, this gap resulted in highly lower transgender voters turn out
8. Overall all political parties unveiled their respective party manifesto for election 2018 just couple of weeks prior to elections and not all of them could mention about transgender rights protection. There was a mention about transgender rights in PPP³, PMLN, ANP, QWP, and in independent candidate from NA-247 Jibran Nasir's manifesto. Rest including PTI⁴ claimed to cover transgender rights under the umbrella of "marginalized groups".
9. High fee for filing nomination papers for contesting elections remained a big challenge for transgender citizens and many had to quit this process
10. One of the challenge was that all transgender candidates except Maria Khan appeared in election (filed their nomination papers with their legal names) as their male names as appeared on their CNIC and it was misleading many international and local media to track about the candidates through ECP website as the entire election campaign of transgender persons was with their chosen names (preferably female names)
11. None of the transgender person had enough information and training on how to contest elections, their rights and duties as candidates, in result none of them had any political agent and none of them had obtained form 45 from their respective constituencies and polling stations
12. There was no enough resources provided to trans rights groups and organizations to provide enough technical support and facilitation to transgender citizens both voters and candidates
13. Huge resources for voter education were provided to various groups country wide which were not having any experience working with transgender groups at all and this is why they miserably failed to ensure active participation of transgender citizens in elections 2018
14. There were no resources or support to deploy transgender election day observers for transgender candidates except for NA-53
15. There was resources to cover transgender candidates' campaigns in their respective constituencies to document the lesson learned, voters impressions about transgender candidates, to identify the gaps in campaign so there could be some follow up support to improve for next elections mainly for local government elections in Pakistan
16. Number of polling stations are reported not to grant access to transgender election day observers mainly in Peshawar, Karachi, Quetta and Lahore, however, transgender election day observers in Islamabad had great stories to share of acceptance and respect from polling and security staff towards them

³ PPP-Pakistan Peoples Party, PMLN-Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz), ANP-Awami National Party, QWP-Qoumi Watan Party

⁴ PTI-Pakistan Tehreek Insaaf

17. Election commission set up a gender desk on July 24, 2018 in ECP control room and shared a toll free number to register any complaints mainly due to gender discrimination but sadly, it was such a last minute arrangement that information could not get disseminated to larger number of transgender citizens
18. ECP also made available a 4 digit mobile phone app 8300 for voters to check their votes and polling station and this app was not responding on election day
19. Transgender candidate from PK-31 have been reporting several times reporting on harassment and threats she faced from other mainstream parties' supporters in her constituency
20. Candidate from NA-142 also reported threats and harassment from mainstream political parties' supporters and she was successful to seek security from district administration during her election campaign
21. There was no such significant support evident from transgender community for their community fellows contesting elections, all financial support and technical support was provided by the cis-gender fellows
22. Media both electronic and print have given huge coverage to transgender candidates election campaign throughout and it included both national and international media, however, much attention was given to candidate from NA-53 and NA-142 which discouraged transgender candidates from other constituencies
23. Many polling stations were reported not accessible for person with disability in general including transgender persons with disabilities
24. There was some internal tension among the transgender candidates those who have CNIC with gender "X" or "Trans" were not happy to see those contesting on male CNIC claiming their space and support from masses as transgender candidates

Recommendations

- 1- Transgender political participation shall not end with this election but it shall be a continuous process to invest more and more to ensure trans inclusive democratic spaces for upcoming bi-elections, local government elections and for next general elections after 05 years
- 2- The issue of CNIC shall be resolved with transgender preferred gender identity expression and it shall also reflect in electoral rolls
- 3- Each of form-XIV shall also include a column for transgender persons as it will be useful to see transgender voter turnout in any of the elections
- 4- ECP shall invite and work with those groups and organizations working for transgender human rights to provide a better insight of the situation and challenges faced by transgender citizens for political/electoral active and meaningful participation
- 5- Partners/donors interested in electoral rights, voter education, inclusive democratic space shall include more and more new groups who are mainly/closely working with transgender groups, all those groups have really worked hard for transgender political rights have been greatly under resource and all the resources were allocated to traditional partners who could not ensure active participation of transgender voters in general election 2018
- 6- ECP's election and voter related information shall be disseminated widely among transgender citizens and groups working for transgender rights can play an effective role in dissemination

- 7- All political parties shall fulfill their commitments to support and promote transgender protection of rights as committed in their election 2018 manifestos
- 8- Transgender citizens shall be equipped with trainings and skills to learn how to hold political parties and representatives in assemblies accountable for safeguarding transgender rights and well being
- 9- Majority of transgender citizens have never been part of electoral process in the country, therefore they need more and more education on their political and electoral rights, mainly through visuals and mock exercise
- 10- Media has to play a critical role to keep the discussion alive on transgender electoral and political rights to ensure inclusive democratic spaces
- 11- There was no separate column in nomination papers and in result number of key trans activists boycott the election and did not take part both in contesting and voting

Disclaimer

This statement is an independent statement by fdi by all means and it is purely based on the facts and reports from the field during election campaign and election day itself without any political biases or affiliations with any of the candidates or parties.