

With a few exceptions, political party representatives expressed satisfaction with the process used by IRIEs to check the lists. ISIE announced on Sept. 6 that 192 lists were rejected for various reasons including: (1) inclusion of candidates who had registered during the second phase of voter registration; (2) withdrawal of some candidates without replacing them; (3) failure to refund the second part of public funding from the 2011 elections by those parties and lists that did not receive three percent of the vote; and (4) inclusion of candidates who had not reached the minimum age of 23 at the time of submission of the lists. The Courts of First Instance have received 133 appeals challenging the rejection of the lists.

While the voter registration period reached a successful conclusion, The Carter Center urges the ISIE to expand efforts to address several issues of concern that arose during the voter registration process that could impact the conduct of the elections. In particular, the Center recommends steps to improve transparency in the work and decision-making processes of the ISIE Council, by improving communication with the public, the IRIEs, and the media, and by ensuring all necessary regulations are completed in a timely manner. In addition, the ISIE should ensure a clear distinction between the roles and tasks of the IRIEs and the regional election administration, as well as consistent understanding and application by the IRIEs of instructions and regulations issued by the ISIE, especially as they relate to voting, counting, and tabulation. Finally, it is important that the ISIE conducts a timely and thorough voter education campaign on the voting process.

The statement below provides an assessment by the Carter Center international election observation mission of the voter registration process and the candidate registration process for the 2014 legislative elections in Tunisia and preliminary recommendations to stakeholders in the electoral process.

VOTER REGISTRATION

Articles 34 and 54 of the constitution guarantee all Tunisian citizens who are 18 or older the right to vote. Voter registration is an established best practice to help guarantee the right of citizens to participate in the public affairs of their country. Although voter registration is not a requisite component of a successful electoral process, in cases where voter registration is conducted in order to determine eligibility to vote, the concept of universal suffrage requires that broad participation be promoted.¹

The Carter Center is encouraged by the concerted efforts taken across Tunisia by the ISIE, the IRIEs, the regional election administration, civil society organizations, and political parties to ensure that all citizens who desire to vote in the upcoming legislative and presidential elections had the opportunity to register during the recently concluded voter registration period.

The ISIE established 33 voter registration centers to facilitate the registration process, one in each of the 27 electoral constituencies in Tunisia and in six constituencies abroad. The offices were staffed by 2,500 registration workers. In addition, 597 fixed registration offices and 275 mobile offices were set up.

¹ ICCPR, General Comment 25, para. 4 and 11.

During the two registration periods, 993,696 Tunisian citizens were added to the voter list.² Of these, 50.5 percent were women. According to the ISIE, when added to the voters who actively registered in 2011 and remained on the list, the total number of registered voters for the 2014 elections is 5,236,244,³ of which 311,034 are registered to vote abroad.

Turnout steadily increased after July 14, reaching an average of 25,847 registered voters a day in the week prior to the initial deadline of the first voter registration period.⁴ On the last two days, the peak figures reached were more than 73,000 for July 21 and over 92,000 for July 22. Low turnouts were experienced during the second voter registration period, with an average daily rate of less than 10,000.

The ISIE did not adopt any regulation clarifying the procedures for voter registration

Throughout the first phase of voter registration, other stakeholders, such as civil society organizations and, to a lesser extent, political parties and the media, were active. The participation of civil society organizations was essential in the eyes of the ISIE itself, which claimed there was a positive correlation between the number of voters registered and the involvement of civil society organizations, particularly at the local level.¹¹ Although there were different approaches among the IRIEs on how to use civil society organizations in the voter registration process, the overall impact of their interventions was positive and worked to increase the numbers of registered voters. Many of these organizations used material received from the ISIE in their awareness-raising activities.¹²

Organizations that did this most prominently were ATIDE, Mourakiboun, Ofiya (in cooperation with CSID), Sawty, I Watch, the Tunisian Human Rights League (LTDH in cooperation with 11 other CSOs), and the Tunisian Scouts. In a press statement released July 23, the ISIE thanked some 130 different CSOs and more than 1,600 volunteers for their active contribution.¹³

To avoid any confusion among voters, The Carter Center urges that the ISIE take steps to ensure a vigorous voter education campaign in all media on the procedures to be implemented on election day, including on how voters can verify where to vote and what form of ID can be used. In addition, the ISIE should ensure that candidate lists, candidates, and parties are informed of the mechanisms in place to resolve

The ISIE also should take steps to improve its communications. The body has not held a meeting open to observers and the public since the electoral process began and does not regularly publish the minutes of its deliberations on its website or in the Official Gazette as required by Article 18 of the law on the ISIE and Article 13 of the ISIE Rules of Procedure.¹⁴ This lack of transparency negatively affects the confidence and trust of the electorate and political parties in the work of the ISIE.¹⁵ Going forward, the Center urges the ISIE to publish its deliberations and regulations on its website in a timely manner.

The initial estimate by the ISIE that there were 4 million possible new voters to register was emblematic of the poor communication strategy. This became an issue once it was clear that nowhere near this number of new voters would register. It was an unrealistic target that the ISIE had to back down from over time.¹⁶ However, the political parties used this original estimate to criticize the efforts of the ISIE to register voters as insufficient.

registration process and the initial review of the candidate lists.

Although the process was inclusive, the objective of gender parity included in Article 24 of the election law unfortunately appears unlikely to be met. Although the law requires that all electoral lists must alternate female and male candidates, it does not mandate horizontal parity, meaning there is no requirement that a female candidate appear at the top of the lists. The lack of horizontal parity is likely to result in a smaller number of women being elected to the assembly.

When the ISIE opened the second phase of voter registration, it announced that only those citizens who had registered to vote during the first phase would be accepted as candidates for the legislative elections. This restriction to run in the legislative elections led to several lists being rejected by the IRIEs.

Overall a total of 15,652 candidates on over 1,500 lists were submitted to the 33 IRIEs by the deadline. This number included 807 candidate lists from political parties, 134 lists from coalitions, and 441 lists of independents submitted in-country, and 83 candidate lists of political parties, 17 coalition lists, and 18 independent lists

international obligations derived from international treaties and international election standards.¹⁸

The Center's observation mission is conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation. The Carter Center, as an independent observer organizati