The January 20, 1996
Palestinian Elections
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Information About The Carter Center and NDI
List of Acronyms

CAC  Israeli Palestinian Civil Affairs Coordination and Cooperation Committee

CEC  Central Election Commission

CELG  Commission on Elections and Local Government

CFRS  Center for Palestine Research and Studies

DEC  District Election Commission

DEO  District Election Office

DLPF  Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine

DOP  Declaration of Principles

EAC  Election Appeals Court

EU  European Union

FIDA  Palestinian Democratic Union

IDF  Israeli Defense Forces

INS  Islamic National Salvation Party

INUP  Islamic National Union Party

NDC  National Democratic Coalition

NGO  Nongovernmental Organizations

PA  Palestinian Authority

PBC  Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation

PDMC  Palestinian Domestic Monitoring Committee

PPF  Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine

PLC  Palestinian Legislative Council

PLO  Palestine Liberation Organization

PNC  Palestine National Council

PPP  Palestine People’s Party

PSC  Polling Station Commission

PSF  Palestinian Preventive Security Forces

Acknowledgments

This report on the January 20, 1996 Palestinian elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip was prepared by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) and The Carter Center. It is based on information gathered by NDI during its two-year presence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as well as by the joint election monitoring program conducted by the two organizations during a four-month period before, during and after the elections.

The report reflects the written contributions and analytic insights of several people. Chapters 1 through 3 are based on a pre-election report, Palestinian Elections: January 20, 1996 authored by NDI Program Assistant Brian Kutulis and NDI West Bank/Gaza Chief of Mission Eric Bjornlund. Chapters 4 through 7 were written by NDI Senior Program Officer Kevin Johnson, NDI Program Officer Olga Milosevijevic, Kamal and The Carter Center’s Susan Palmer, assistant director for projects in the Conflict Resolution Program. NDI Director of Middle East Programs Thomas G. Midl, NDI Public Information Director Sue Grabowski, and Bjornlund edited this final report. Harry Barnes, director of The Carter Center’s Conflict Resolution and Human Rights Programs, and Robert Pastor, Carter Center fellow and senior advisor on elections, also contributed significantly to this report.
NDI and The Carter Center appreciate the contributions of all the delegates on two pre-election missions and the observer delegation to the Palestinian elections. The election-week delegation comprised 41 members from 11 countries and included political and civic leaders, elected officials, scholars and journalists. Most of the delegates had participated in or observed other transitional elections, and their personal observations and complementary insights proved to be invaluable.

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Most important, we would like to express our admiration to the many Palestinian women and men who, in complicated and uncertain circumstances, continue to labor for the development of a strong and democratic Palestinian civil society. They serve as beacons for democratic ideals, not only throughout Palestinian society, but in the wider Arab world that has focused so much attention on them.

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Executive Summary

The Palestinian elections of January 20, 1996, marked an historic step in the Middle East peace process that built upon the 1979 Camp David Accords and the 1993 Oslo Accords. The elections provided Palestinians living in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem an opportunity to participate in building their own democratic self-governing polity for the first time.

A 41-member international delegation, organized by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) and The Carter Center, observed these elections in all 16 constituencies of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. One million Palestinians elected an 88-member Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) and, on a separate ballot, the Re'ees of the Executive Authority of the Council.

The legal and administrative framework for these elections emerged through a complex process defined by parallel tracks of dialogue—negotiations between the Palestinian Authority and Israel, on the one hand, and consultations by the Palestinian Authority with a range of political organizations, on the other. At the same time, public discussions about alternative election systems continued among intellectuals and in the newspapers, and the administrative infrastructure for the elections was established. The result was a well-

conceived plan that was substantially modified as elections neared, creating a mix of the planned and the ad hoc.

The NDI/Carter Center's principal findings, as discussed in this report, are as follows:

- **Opportunity for a Democratic Beginning.** These elections marked the first time that Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip chose territory wide representatives. By selecting among candidates who espoused competing visions of how to govern the autonomous areas under Palestinian Authority control, nearly 80 percent of eligible Palestinians turned out to vote, voiced preferences for the future and set an important regional precedent for popular participation in governance.

- **Election Authorities, the Pre-Election Period and Election Day.**
  Given the tense environment that preceded the elections, the accomplishment of January 20 was substantial. Palestinians organized their first-ever national elections with relatively few administrative problems and with no incidents of violence. The NDI/Carter Center pre-election and election delegations issued a series of press releases that helped to inform and highlight important issues surrounding the elections. (See Appendices A-E.) Palestinian election officials responded creatively and flexibly to the many challenges resulting from last-minute changes to the election law.

- **Setting a Regional Precedent.** The Palestinian election law explicitly permitted independent Palestinian and international election observers to operate throughout the pre-election period and on election day. This unprecedented allowance for monitors sets an important standard for elections in the Arab world.

- **Irregularities Common in Most Transition Elections.** Despite procedural irregularities on election day—overcrowding, interference by security personnel, and arguably improper processing of illiterate voters—there was no persuasive evidence that the election results failed to reflect the choices made by Palestinian voters. The observed irregularities are common in transition elections worldwide.

- **Israeli/Palestinian Cooperation.** Despite problems before and on January 20, Palestinian and Israeli officials cooperated in organizing the logistical preparations for these elections, which
Israel left almost entirely in the hands of Palestinian decisionmakers.

• The Counting and Appeals Process. The counting phase constituted the greatest challenge to the process and appears to have somewhat diminished public confidence in the integrity of the elections. Disorganization in the tabulation of results, changes in the preliminary lists of winners and reports of missing polling station tallies created an atmosphere of suspicion in the days following the elections. The Central Election Commission did not use its authority and stature to calm these anxieties by adequately disseminating information and investigating alleged problems.

• Recommendations for Future Elections. NDI/Carter Center believe that public confidence is essential to any transition process and suggest that the Palestinian Authority consider several procedural modifications in order to enhance confidence in future Palestinian elections. These suggestions include: greater public outreach and information sharing, greater transparency and better defined roles for the security forces.

The momentum toward democratic consolidation slowed since the elections. Suicide bombings in Israel and the ensuing closure of the Palestinian territories increased Palestinian and Israeli disenchantment with the peace process. Since these events, enactment of a constitutional framework for Palestinian self-governance has unfortunately been delayed throughout much of 1996, and the Palestinian Legislative Council has struggled to clarify its role in the governance of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Meanwhile, Israeli elections in May complicated the implementation of the Oslo Accords. Nevertheless, a democratic spirit has been injected into Palestinian politics. The greatest achievement to date has been the creation of a Legislative Council where lively debate among members demonstrates that they have a clear sense of representing and speaking for their constituents.

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December 1996

Chapter 1
Political Developments in the West Bank and Gaza Strip From 1993 to 1996

The Palestinian elections on January 20, 1996, marked an historic step forward in the Middle East peace process whose previous highpoints had been the signing of the Oslo Accords and the Camp David Accords. The elections also provided Palestinians an opportunity to participate in building a democratic self-governing polity by voting for political leaders for the first time in history. This introductory chapter provides the context in which the Palestinian elections took place by briefly summarizing the important events that
shaped the negotiations between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel since 1991.

The end of the 1991 Gulf War provided the impetus for resuming the peace process that began at Camp David in 1978. The Gulf War represented an important post-Cold War milestone as the Soviet Union joined an international coalition led by the United States to force Iraq's troops out of Kuwait. In the aftermath of the war, the United States and the Soviet Union organized an international peace conference attended by Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and a joint Palestinian-Jordanian delegation in Madrid in October 1991. This joint delegation enabled Palestinians to participate without obliging Israel to recognize the PLO, although it was generally understood that the Palestinian participants were, in fact, officially sanctioned stand-ins for the absent PLO. Although the Madrid conference lowered certain psychological barriers as long-time enemies sat across the table from each other to discuss their differences, no substantive progress was made. Subsequent rounds of negotiations in Washington also proved unproductive.

In 1992, as the talks continued, elections in Israel and the United States produced changes in government in both countries. The Israeli elections brought the Labor Party into power as the leading party in government with Yitzhak Rabin selected as the new prime minister. Rabin soon hinted that he was prepared to strike a deal with the Palestinians. By the summer of 1993, it became publicly known that Israel and the PLO were holding secret talks in Oslo sponsored by the government of Norway.

The Declaration of Principles

The meetings between Israelis and Palestinians in Norway precipitated the mutual recognition of Israel and the PLO on September 9, 1993. In a letter from PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat to Israeli Prime Minister Rabin, the PLO formally accepted Israel's right to exist "in peace and security" and committed itself to the Middle East peace process based on U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. Furthermore, the PLO promised to submit to the Palestine National Council (PNC) a measure to delete from the Palestine National Charter those articles that deny Israel's right to exist. In a letter from Rabin to Arafat, Israel formally recognized the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people.

Four days later, on September 13, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and chief PLO negotiator Mahmoud Abbas (also known as Abu Mazen) signed the Declaration of Principles (DOP) in Washington. Arafat and Rabin stood alongside the signers and then met in an historic handshake that captured worldwide attention. The international enthusiasm for this historic agreement, however, was not matched among Israelis and Palestinians. For both peoples, many of the details of the accord and the ensuing compromises have proved controversial and divisive.

The DOP established the framework for negotiations between Israel and the PLO, and outlined a timetable for the gradual transfer of certain governing authorities to the Palestinians, at which point a five-year interim period of self-rule would begin while negotiations continued. While the initial deadlines were not met, the original DOP framework still generally governs negotiations.

Based on U.N. Resolutions 242 and 338, the DOP stipulates that permanent status negotiations on Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, security arrangements, borders and other issues of common interest will begin no later than the beginning of the third year of the interim period. The permanent status negotiations are to be conducted "between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian people representatives." This five-year interim period began on May 4, 1994, with the signing of the Cairo Accords, which marked the beginning of Palestinian self-rule in Gaza and Jericho and set the deadline for the conclusion of the final status talks for May 1999.

Following the signing of the DOP, Israel and the PLO agreed on the formation of joint committees charged with negotiating security matters, economic cooperation between Israel and areas under the PA control, an interim agreement detailing the structure and powers of the self-governing authority, and election modalities for the Palestinian Interim Self-Governing Authority, also known as the Palestinian Authority (PA). These joint Israeli-Palestinian committees continued
negotiations that eventually led to the signing of the Interim Agreement in 1995.

In the months after the signing of the DOP, discussions on the transfer of certain responsibilities from the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) to the PA resulted in a delay in the transfer timetable. Israeli and Palestinian negotiators reportedly disagreed from the outset on the size and borders of the autonomous Jericho area, control of the border crossings to Jordan and Egypt, and the number and movement of Israeli soldiers assigned to remain in the Gaza Strip to protect Israeli settlements.

In addition, an upsurge of protests, and in some cases, acts of violence by Israeli and Palestinian opponents of the peace process moved both Rabin and Arafat to toughen their negotiating positions. Israeli settlers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and their supporters in Israel accused Rabin of abandoning the settlements that previous Israeli governments had promoted and of endangering Israeli security by ceding a limited degree of control of the Gaza Strip and West Bank to the PA. Palestinians opposed to the DOP charged Arafat with making too many concessions to the Israelis—principally by agreeing to postpone resolution of several issues important to Palestinian sovereignty: the status of East Jerusalem and the plight of Palestinian refugees from the 1948 and 1967 wars. As a result, Israel and the PLO failed to meet the DOP's December 13 deadline for signing an accord on the redeployment of Israeli forces in the Gaza Strip and Jericho. New deadlines were set and later missed, and negotiations continued into 1994.

Negotiations were interrupted on February 25, 1994 when Baruch Goldstein, an Israeli settler living in the West Bank, shot and killed 29 Palestinians praying at the Ibrahimi Mosque near the Tomb of the Patriarchs in the West Bank town of Hebron. Following the massacre, the PLO demanded the disarming of all settlers, the dismantling of settlements in and around Hebron, and the establishment of an international force to protect Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Although Israeli Prime Minister Rabin rejected the PLO's call for immediate negotiations on settlements, Israel condemned the Hebron killings in strong language. Despite the challenge that the

Hbron massacre posed to the Palestinian-Israeli peace process, the negotiations continued.

**The May 4, 1994 Cairo Agreement**

In the face of protests and acts of violence by those opposed to the negotiations, Israel and the PLO signed an agreement on May 4 in Cairo that formally established the Palestinian Authority with executive powers in the Gaza Strip and Jericho. The agreement marked the beginning of Palestinian self-rule and the initial transfer of power to the Palestinian Authority. According to the agreement, the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority covered an area around the West Bank town of Jericho and the entire Gaza Strip, excluding Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip, the main roads leading to those settlements and Israeli military installations.

The agreement stipulated that Israeli troops would complete their withdrawal within three weeks of signing the agreement, after which a Palestinian police force would provide security in the autonomous areas. The joint civil affairs committee and two joint subcommittees for the Gaza Strip and Jericho area were established to coordinate matters between the Palestinian Authority and Israel. Israel retained control over external security, the security of Israelis and Israeli settlements as well as border crossings from Egypt and Jordan into self-rule zones. Immigration procedures were jointly administered. Both sides also pledged to take all measures necessary to prevent terrorism, crime and other hostile acts directed against each other. The agreement allowed the PA to print postage stamps, establish radio and television transmissions, and issue travel documents for Palestinian residents.

As a confidence-building measure, Israel agreed to release or turn over to the PA within five weeks approximately 5,000 Palestinian prisoners or detainees. Finally, laws and military orders in effect in the Gaza Strip and Jericho area before the signing of the agreement remained in effect unless amended or rescinded in accordance with provisions set by the Cairo Agreement.

On May 18, the IDF completed its partial withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. Israeli soldiers remained to protect the roughly 5,000 Israeli settlers who continued to stay in the Gaza Strip. On July 1, Yasser Arafat arrived in the Gaza Strip from Egypt, the first time in more than two decades that he had set foot on Palestinian land. On
August 29, Israel and the PLO signed the Early Empowerment Accords at the Gaza Strip’s Erez border crossing. This agreement transferred to the Palestinians limited authority in the areas of education, tourism, health, social welfare and taxation, even in those parts of the West Bank not yet formally under PA control. It was intended to prepare the way for a redeployment of Israeli troops in the remainder of the West Bank, the introduction of Palestinian administration and the holding of Palestinian elections.

Palestinian Opposition to the DOP and the Cairo Accords

Despite the widespread euphoria that characterized the first several weeks following the signing of the DOP, discretion ensued, and critics of the DOP and the process grew more vocal. One line of Palestinian criticism focused on the terms of the DOP (and later agreements) and asserted that Arafat had settled for less than the Palestinians should have received. Palestinian detractors objected to the piecemeal redeployment of Israeli forces and insisted that all occupied territories be addressed as a unit. Indeed they disputed the concept of ‘redeployment’ itself rather than a ‘withdrawal’ of Israeli forces as such. Finally, critics charged that postponing resolution of issues such as the status of Jerusalem, settlements and the rights of Palestinian refugees, would pose a danger in the face of the ongoing construction of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and around Jerusalem.

After the signing of the May 4 agreement, several opposition groups, including leftists such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)² and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP)³, and Islamic groups such as the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas)⁴ and Islamic Jihad,⁵ criticized the accords for having effectively allowed Israel to maintain control of the Palestinian affairs. These groups also remained opposed to the DOP in principle, as they refused to accept the legitimacy of Israel’s statehood. Moreover, the agreement maintained existing Israeli rules and military orders, and withheld major legislative, judicial and executive powers from the PA, by then based in Gaza Strip and Jericho. In particular, critics charged that the Joint Civil Affairs Committee and subcommittees undermined the powers of the Palestinian Authority and effectively reduced the PA’s role to that of a ‘subcontractor’ implementing Israeli policy.

As the PA established its presence in Gaza Strip and Jericho, another overlapping school of criticism increasingly arrayed at Arafat’s style of leadership. He was accused of failing to consult others on

sentiment.

² PFLP is a leftist political faction of the PLO headed by George Habash. Based in Damascas, PFLP views the Palestinian struggle for independence within the context of its broader objectives of promoting leftist ideology and pan-Arab nationalism. PFLP’s support in December 1995, according to a poll conducted by the Center for Palestine Research and Studies (CPRS), was 5.8 percent. CPRS is an independent policy research institute located in the West Bank city of Natean. With the guidance and financial assistance from the International Republican Institute (IRI) in Washington D.C., CPRS has conducted political polling since September 1993. These polls have been one of the few reliable indicators of Palestinian popular

³ DFLP is a leftist group that broke away from PFLP in 1969 after disagreements about the movement’s platform. A member of the PLO and based in Damascas, DFLP’s support borders around 2 percent, according to CPRS polls.

⁴ Hamas, a militant Muslim movement that emerged during the intifada, the Palestinian uprising of the late 1980s, was founded by members of the Muslim Brotherhood. Led by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin (who has been in an Israeli prison since the late 1980s), Hamas is not a member of the PLO. Its goal is the establishment of a Palestinian Islamic state. Hamas became popular among some Palestinians by developing a strong network that has provided social, educational and health services to Palestinians. Its military wing, the Izz Ad-Deen Al-Qasem Brigades, has claimed responsibility for terrorist attacks and bombings directed at Israel since the signing of the DOP. CPRS polls placed Hamas’ public support in the pre-election period between 10 and 15 percent during 1993 to 1995.

⁵ A small Islamic militant movement that formed in the mid-1980s, Islamic Jihad became active in organizing Palestinian protests during the intifada. Islamic Jihad is infamous for planning suicide terrorist attacks against Israel in recent years. Unlike Hamas, Islamic Jihad has an extensive network of social institutions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. According to CPRS polls, support for Islamic Jihad was approximately 2 percent in December 1995.
important decisions, including the Palestine National Council (PNC), the nominally representative body of the PLO. Moreover, patterns of intimidation and reports of human rights abuses by PA security forces established by Arafat in the Gaza Strip and Jericho made him susceptible to charges of authoritarianism. On January 22, 1995, the entire peace process was threatened when two Islamic Jihad suicide bombers killed 22 Israelis in an attack at a bus stop in northern Israel. Prime Minister Rabin reacted by calling for full and complete separation between the Palestinians and the Israelis, and by announcing plans to build by-pass roads so that Israeli settlers in the West Bank would not have to drive near Palestinian communities. Rabin's proposal also effectively barred Palestinians from working in Israel. Some analysts believed that Rabin also proposed this separation to prepare the Israelis psychologically for an eventual withdrawal from the Palestinian territories.

In the short term, the Israeli government moved to seal off the West Bank and the Gaza Strip from Israelis. These closures resulted in severe economic hardship for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip who had grown economically dependent upon Israel after more than a quarter century of occupation. As the diplomatic process continued through most of 1995, Israelis and Palestinians alike began to question the value of reconciliation. Two years into the negotiations and in the wake of increased attacks, the Israeli public began to feed less, rather than more secure as the Rabin government had promised it would at the start of negotiations. On the Palestinian side, expectations of increased economic opportunities were not met when the rate of unemployment soared following the Israeli-imposed closure of its borders with the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

As the shock of the January bombing faded, Israel gradually eased its closure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and resumed negotiations with the Palestinians. PLO Chairman Arafat and Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres announced a July 1 deadline for completing negotiations on the Interim Agreement. Israeli and American officials underscored the demonstrated commitment of the PA to halt terrorism against Israelis. Throughout most of 1995, the PA continued to arrest those suspected of plotting terrorist attacks and asserted that it was devoting efforts to prevent future terrorist activity. The Palestinian security force's numbers grew significantly as the PA cracked down on opponents of the peace process.

Negotiations Leading to Oslo II

Palestinian-Israeli negotiators faced numerous challenges during the course of 1995. In late spring, the Israeli Housing Ministry announced that it would confiscate Palestinian-owned land in East Jerusalem for Israeli settlements. The Palestinians argued that the seizure would violate the letter and spirit of the 1993 Declaration of Principles and the 1994 Cairo agreement. According to these agreements, the status of Jerusalem was to be determined in final status talks that would follow the Palestinian elections. In the eyes of the Palestinians, the confiscation amounted to an Israeli attempt to establish more "facts on the ground" and thus increase its bargaining position at the commencement of final status negotiations.

Criticism of Israel's announcement to confiscate land in Jerusalem mounted in the capitals of the Arab world and Europe. As a result, the PA's government decided to suspend its confiscation decision in the face of a vote of no-confidence led by the Israeli Arab parties on which the government depended for its majority. As this controversy received enhanced attention, Israeli and Palestinian negotiators continued to wrestle with issues such as Israeli troop redeployment from Hebron and questions about the scope of the PA's authority. The July 1 deadline passed, and new deadlines were set and then missed.

Adding more fuel to the fire were the increasing number of confrontations between Palestinians and Israeli settlers in the West Bank and Gaza. Confiscation of land in the West Bank led to protests by Palestinians and pro-peace Israelis, and clashes between these protesters and Israeli settlers. The existence and operation of Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem constituted another contentious issue. Israelis opposed to a Palestinian institutional presence in East Jerusalem protested at the Orient House, the PA's unofficial headquarters in East Jerusalem. The Israeli government hinted that it might move to close all East Jerusalem offices of PA-affiliated organizations on the grounds that it reinforced Palestinian claims in East Jerusalem. Palestinians viewed these sites as an important institutional presence that would strengthen their claim to East Jerusalem in the final status talks.
Political Developments 1993–1996

Toward the end of the summer of 1995 and throughout September, rumors proliferated that Israel and the PLO would soon sign an interim agreement. The PLO and Israel held marathon talks in Taba, Egypt and nearby Elat, Israel, with Arafat and Peres participating in all-night negotiating sessions. Just as those talks seemed to disintegrate with Arafat storming out from one of the protracted meetings, an agreement was announced. The immediate pressure of a new deadline (the start of Rosh Hashana, the holiday celebrating the beginning of the Jewish New Year) and the ongoing pressure of the Israeli and American electoral cycles contributed to reaching the agreement.

Oslo II

The Interim Agreement, popularly known as “Oslo II” (though it was negotiated in Taba and Elat, among other locales), was signed by Israel and the PLO on September 28, 1995 at a White House ceremony in Washington D.C. Oslo II is a complex agreement that contains detailed provisions for Israeli troop redeployment out of Palestinian population centers in the West Bank, further defines the nature and powers of the Palestinian Interim Self-Governing Authority and establishes the framework for the Palestinian electoral system. A key component of the agreement was the provision for the election of a Palestinian Council and the Ra'ees (chief executive) of the Executive Authority with responsibility for agreed upon governmental functions.

Considering the highly polarized political environment in the West Bank and Gaza, and in Israel, the signing of Oslo II represented a significant accomplishment. Oslo II marked the beginning of the end of Israeli military occupation of certain populated portions of the West Bank, and established the political and administrative framework for Israeli-Palestinian relations through the conclusion of the final status talks. The agreement created a number of Israeli-Palestinian committees to coordinate a myriad of activities and address issues ranging from security patrols in certain areas of the West Bank to the administration of economic affairs. The agreement contains important compromises on Israeli troop redeployment, discussed below.

The Assassination of Yitzhak Rabin

The November 4 assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by an extremist Israel opposed to the peace accords created new uncertainties about the peace and threatened to derail the process. Initially, questions arose about whether the peace policies of the Labor government would survive without Rabin. Rabin had enjoyed a popular reputation that was synonymous with security. His position as the former chief of staff of the Israeli Defense Forces (during Israel's victory in the 1967 war). Some doubted that any other Israeli leader would have been able to forge the same compromises and make the same concessions without losing public support. Rabin's assassination shocked Israeli society, revealing the Israeli radicals opposed to peace with Palestinians could be as murderous as the Egyptian opponents of Anwar Sadat's peace.

Rabin's assassination temporarily undercut the influence and popularity of the Israeli political right, which had in previous months escalated its rhetoric against the peace process. The tragic event also led to a short-lived increase in popular support for Oslo II among the Israeli public. Before the assassination, Israeli public opinion regarding the Interim Agreement was divided virtually in half, for and against the proposal. Less than a week following Rabin's assassination, the Israeli newspaper _Yedioth Ahronoth_ published a public opinion poll that reflected a major shift in favor of Labor Party's peace policies: 74 percent of those polled favored the Israeli government's continued implementation of the Interim Agreement.

Shimon Peres, the foreign minister who had been central to the negotiations and who shared the 1994 Nobel Peace Prize with Rabin and Arafat, became the new prime minister. He formed a new government that won a vote of confidence by a 62–8 vote, with 38 members abstaining. Peres insisted calls to slow the peace process in the wake of Rabin's assassination and demonstrated every intention to move ahead and even accelerate the schedule for Israeli troop redeployment away from areas in the West Bank defined by the Interim Agreement.

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6 Ra'ees is an Arabic word with ambiguous meaning: it can be alternatively translated into English, the language of negotiations, as “president” or “chairman,” depending on the body or entity that the Ra'ees heads. In order to avoid a dispute about whether or not the position of Ra'ees would be equivalent to that of a head of state, the term Ra'ees remained officially untranslated.
Israeli Redevelopment from the West Bank

Oslo II divides the West Bank into Zones A, B and C. The Palestinian Authority assert administrative control for Zone A, the large population centers from which the IDF withdrew in the closing months of 1995. In Zone B, encompassing virtually all other Palestinian residential areas, Israel and the Palestinian Authority coordinate efforts to maintain law and order. The Israeli military maintains control in Zone C, which principally comprises Israeli settlements, Israeli military installations and unpopulated areas. Zones A and B, those in which the Palestinian Authority would exert either total or partial responsibility, amount to an area less than 30 percent of the West Bank, not including East Jerusalem.

The IDF withdrew from Zones A and B ahead of schedule and established checkpoints outside of the cities of Bethlehem, Jenin, Nablus, Qalqilyah, Ramallah and Tulkarem. Oslo II contains special arrangements for Hebron, where passions run high among both Palestinian and the small group of Israeli settlers who live within the city itself. A partial redeployment was made from towns and villages surrounding Hebron and much of the city itself before the elections, but Israel retained responsibility for the security of Israeli settlers in the area, including a group that lives at the center of the city.

For the most part, redeployment was completed without any major problems, although a few incidents did occur. On November 30, for example, a group of Palestinians, reportedly acting in response to an IDF raid on a cafe, abducted two Israeli border police officers in the West Bank town of Jenin. The kidnappers detained the soldiers for several hours and released them following intervention by Arafat and other Palestinian leaders. Israeli officials issued a warning that the incident could delay redeployment. Palestinian police arrested the kidnappers and the Palestinian Authority sentenced them to nine years of hard labor.

Hamas-PLO Dialogue

While Israel redeployed from parts of the West Bank, the PA prepared for elections (discussed below in Chapter 2). In addition to completing the various technical steps requisite for holding elections, the PA continued its discussions with the largest opposition movement in Palestinian politics, Hamas.

Repeatedly opposing any sort of political settlement with Israel, Hamas rejected the DOP and subsequent PLO-Israeli agreements. Hamas had endorsed violence against Israel and its military wing had perpetrated a number of terrorist attacks against Israelis aimed at undermining Palestinian agreements with Israel. Under pressure from Israel and the international community to stop violent attacks against Israel, the Palestinian Authority began to crack down on the militant groups in late 1994. The tension between Hamas and the PA came to a head on November 18, 1994, when PA police turned their guns against demonstrators at a mosque in Gaza Strip. Thirteen people were killed and 500 were wounded in the fighting, and policemen in Gaza City denounced Arafat as "a traitor" and "collaborator."

After a strained period, relations between the PA and the Islamic opposition underwent a gradual rapprochement. Following clashes between the PA and Hamas in the Gaza Strip, leaders of the PA and those movements tried to reach a compromise. In late August 1995, the public learned that the Palestinian Authority and Hamas had been negotiating the role of Hamas in Palestinian political life in general and more specifically the participation of Hamas in the upcoming elections.

The public revealed of these talks sparked a debate within Hamas. In general, Hamas members in the West Bank and Gaza Strip were more willing to seek a compromise with the PA than their counterparts in the outside in countries such as Jordan and Syria. In October, leaders representing different factions of Hamas met in Khartoum to discuss the movement's strategy vis-à-vis the Palestinian Authority and participation in the elections. While this meeting was underway, the PA, in a conciliatory gesture to Hamas, released a few prominent Hamas activists that it had imprisoned, including Mahmoud Zahhar and Sheikh Ahmad Bahar.

Following these discussions, the PA and Hamas conducted negotiations in Cairo in which the PA sought to convince Hamas to participate in the election and renounce violence against Israel. As negotiations continued between the PA and Hamas in Cairo, Hamas leaders in Damascus announced a boycott of the elections on December 9. Within the West Bank and Gaza Strip, there was dissent in the ranks of Hamas. On December 7, 1995, Iyad Falujji, editor of the Hamas-affiliated Al-Watan, closed down the newspaper because of tensions between him and Hamas leadership. Sources in Hamas...
asserted that Fakouji's membership in Hamas had been suspended months earlier and that he did not speak on behalf of Hamas. Shortly after Fakouji's public dispute with Hamas, Arafat appointed Fakouji director of the National Reconciliation Office.1

The negotiations between Hamas and the PA in Cairo ended after Hamas refused to promise to end attacks in Israel. However, on December 21, 1999, Hamas and the Palestinian Authority released a statement announcing that they had agreed on a set of broad principles intended to strengthen Palestinian national unity and increase dialogue among the political factions. The two sides agreed to establish a joint committee to solve any future problems. The statement also announced that Hamas formally decided not to participate in the elections, but that this non-participation was not a formal boycott, "because Hamas did not intend to embarrass" the members of the Palestinian Authority. Additionally, Hamas feared that a full boycott would marginalize the movement. (See Appendix F.) After the assassination of one of its members, allegedly by the Israeli security forces, in January Hamas-led large demonstrations but stated that it would not retaliate against Israel before or during the elections. Hamas also said that it intended to participate in local elections anticipated in late 1996 or early 1997.

For the most part, Hamas leaders regarded this entire electoral process as flawed because of its legal basis in the PLO-Israeli agreements and did not want to legitimize the process by participating in it. In the view of Hamas and other movements not participating in the elections, conducting elections under the conditions prescribed by the Interim Agreement was impossible while the Israeli occupation continued (albeit on a much more limited scale) and Israeli settlements remained in place in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Also, some Hamas members criticized the failure to allow the Palestinian diaspora to participate in the elections. Finally, others objected to the limitations on the powers of the Council. However, Hamas leaders described elections as the basis of political legitimacy and the key to long-term stability. Since many of its supporters wanted to participate in the Palestinian Council elections, Hamas leaders said they wavered the elections to proceed without disruption or violence. Although Hamas did not participate officially, as will be discussed in Chapter 3,

1 Fakouji later became a candidate for the Palestinian Legislative Council on the official Fatah list.

several individuals affiliated with Hamas ran as independent candidates or candidates of "partisan entities" that registered with the Ministry of Interior.

Conclusion

Events that followed the signing of the DOP marked a period of dramatic change for Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem. Acts of violence by Israeli and Palestinian extremists failed to realize their aim to halt the PLO-Israeli negotiations and destroy hope for a peaceful settlement. The two sides agreed to establish a joint committee to solve any future problems. The statement also announced that Hamas formally decided not to participate in the elections, but that this non-participation was not a formal boycott, "because Hamas did not intend to embarrass" the members of the Palestinian Authority. Additionally, Hamas feared that a full boycott would marginalize the movement. (See Appendix F.) After the assassination of one of its members, allegedly by the Israeli security forces, in January Hamas-led large demonstrations but stated that it would not retaliate against Israel before or during the elections. Hamas also said that it intended to participate in local elections anticipated in late 1996 or early 1997.

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and Israeli alike were heartened by the involvement of international advisors in a variety of electoral issues.

In February 1994, NDI established a presence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to begin a long-term civic education program and respond to the Commission on Elections and Local Government (CELG) requests for comparative information about electoral systems. In response to the invitation for election observers, the U.S. government designated NDI, in conjunction with The Carter Center, to mobilize an international delegation as the American contribution to the international monitoring effort. Building on NDI’s programming experience, the two organizations assembled a permanent team on the ground, sent two pre-election missions, in November and in December, organized a 41-member delegation in January and continued to report on the process.

Chapter 2

The Framework for the 1996 Palestinian Elections

In the January 20, 1996, elections, Palestinian residents of the West Bank and Gaza Strip elected an 88-member Palestinian Legislative Council and, on a separate ballot, the Ra’ees of the Executive Authority of the Council. The election law that governed these contests outlined a majoritarian system with multi-member districts and open lists that allowed voters to split their votes among candidates of different affiliations. For example, in a constituency with four representatives, each voter could vote for up to four candidates; the four candidates amassing the greatest vote totals were elected. The West Bank including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip comprised 16 constituencies, 11 in the West Bank and five in Gaza Strip.

The legal and administrative framework for these elections emerged through a complex process shaped by negotiations between
announcement of the CELG and its membership did not occur until early May 1994. Receiving substantial advisory assistance from the European Union and some information and advice from NDI and the U.S.-based International Foundation for Election Systems, the CELG began establishing district election offices (DEOs) and making tentative plans in advance of the Interim Agreement with Israel.

While the PA took these first organizational steps, most Palestinians considered elections a remote prospect because of the missed deadlines for elections between 1990 and 1992, and widespread defeat and criticism of the DOP. A few Palestinian intellectuals and nongovernmental organizations offered proposals to debate the specifics of implementing the promised elections, but there was little response from the PA, in part because of the exigency of ongoing negotiations with Israel. The PA did not want to embrace popular Palestinian demands that Israel may not permit, nor did the PA wish to be seen as making deals with Israel without Palestinian consent. In an effort to solicit the views of intellectual leaders in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Erakat arranged meetings to seek informal input on the election law from political party leaders and academics. He also sought to inform Palestinians about the electoral system through public forums. In addition, Erakat allowed NDI to organize a program to promote discussion and understanding of electoral developments.

The signing of the Oslo II agreement cleared the way for elections, but many Palestinians continued to harbor doubts that elections would take place in the near future. At the time of the signing of Oslo II, it was widely expected that the campaign and voting would occur in March or April 1996, after the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, which was to begin on January 21, 1995. However, PLO Chairman Arafat and Israeli Foreign Minister Peres announced at a press conference that the elections would be held before Ramadan. This announcement precipitated a flurry of activity to hasten electoral and political preparations. For many the date remained an issue of debate and uncertainty. While administrative preparations accelerated in November, the PA did not promulgate an election law, appoint an election commission or formally set the precise date for January's eventual elections until December.

Throughout the fall of 1995, widespread discussion continued about the type of electoral system that should be implemented. The
CELG had planned for a majoritarian system based on 16 multi-member districts. Some Palestinians, particularly those affiliated with small opposition political movements, argued that the district-based majoritarian system would disproportionately enhance the political influence of traditionally prominent families and other local interests, and inhibit the development of political parties and other transregional organizations. Some NGOs and political parties proposed a proportional representation system with a single national list arguing that such a system works to the advantage of small, dispersed political parties and is therefore more inclusive and thus produces a more representative body. Critics contend that such a system can produce a fragmented deliberative or legislative body, unable to establish a stable majority, and it can diffuse representation of local concerns.

Debate also ensued about the issue of quotas. The draft law provided vaguely for a quota of several seats for Christians, which some criticized as unnecessary or divisive, while others proposed quotas for women. Other proposed revisions addressed the issues of whether officials of the Palestinian Authority would be required to resign from their posts in order to compete and under what conditions they could be rehired if they lost.

These issues were discussed in several public forums organized by the CELG (which, by November, was also known as the caretaker Central Election Commission or CEC) and raised in letters and proposals to the CEC. CEC Chairman Erakat declared that the law "has been debated by all factions that constitute the political reality of the Palestinian people."

At a Palestinian Authority Council of Ministers meeting in early December, several opposition leaders were invited to participate in final deliberations on the election law. At this late date, the PA Council of Ministers considered a proposal for a mixed system, whereby some candidates would be elected according to the majoritarian system established in the draft law and other seats would be allocated proportionally from national lists. Ultimately, Arafat declined to adopt this format and opted to retain the district-based majoritarian system.

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Election Administration

The administration of the election preparations progressed under mixed conditions. On the one hand, a solidly established local and regional system functioned effectively. As noted above, DEOs were created in each district except Jerusalem by mid-1995. The recurring delays in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations provided time for these offices to orient themselves and to begin early preparations for registration. The DEOs recruited, trained and organized 7,000 teachers who served as polling station commissioners responsible for overseeing the voter registration canvas and the operations of the polling station on election day. Each polling station commission comprised four polling station commissioners, or election officials.

On the larger level, the administration of elections was less well organized, principally because of the long delay in establishing the Central Election Commission and the Election Appeals Court (EAC).

On December 21, a week after the start of candidate registration and 40 days after the commencement of voter registration, PLO Chairman Arafat announced the new nine-member Central Election Commission, Mahmoud Abbas, the PLO's chief negotiator of the Oslo agreement and a leading member of the Fatah Central Committee, was appointed chairman of the Central Election Commission, taking over for caretaker CEC Chairman Saeb Erakat, who was a candidate in the Jericho district. (See Appendix G.)

Erakat officially resigned December 3, but continued as nominal caretaker for the election administration until the appointment of the commission. However, during the first week of candidate registration, there was no one responsible for determining whether or not candidate applications met the criteria set by the Interim Agreement and the election law.

The PA delayed the appointment of the CEC in order to allow political factions more time to reconsider their participation in the elections. While some were concerned that the absence of a commission to oversee the election process would lead to administrative incoherence, others noted that the reason for the delay in appointing the commission was laudable.

The administrative structure responsible for actually implementing the elections remained in place throughout the immediate pre-election period. This apparatus was led by two coordinators, Jab Barghouti for the West Bank and Osama Abu Safia for Gaza Strip, who were
assisted by district election managers responsible for administration in each of the 16 constituencies. Two to three assistants supported these managers at the district level. Most district offices were open and most district managers worked on preparations in their areas for several months. Because elections were postponed several times during negotiations leading to the Interim Agreement, election officials enjoyed several months to prepare for the beginning of the process, as most DEOs began their work in the spring of 1995. There was accordingly less time to prepare for election-day activities, and the post-election handling of complaints—particularly when the timetable suddenly shortened just as the voter registration process began.

The district managers divided the districts into polling stations of up to 1,000 voters each. In many cases polling stations were located in nearby schools. Four-member polling station commissions, comprising teachers living in or near the area, were established for each polling station. The polling station commissions administered the door-to-door voter registration canvass, discussed below. In advance of the canvass these officials participated in CEC-organized training sessions on registration processes and procedures.

The CEC received considerable outside technical support, largely from the European Union. European Union technical advisor Andrew Ellis, formerly secretary general of the British Liberal Democratic Party, led a small team that worked in the West Bank and Gaza Strip for almost two years to assist in planning and preparing for the elections.

On December 23, 1995, the Palestinian Authority established the Palestinian Election Appeals Court with offices in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Its members were Abdullah Ghuzlan, Imad Salmi, Sami Saabah, Shaker Marzouk, and Chairman Zuhair Sourani of Gaza. The court was responsible for hearing public proceedings at which it would address appeals and objections submitted to annul or amend CEC decisions.

In addition to the CEC and the Electoral Appeals Court, the election law provided for district election commissions (DECs) to supervise election administration at the district level. The DECs were not named until late December, long after functions they were required to oversee, such as the acceptance of candidate nominations, had already begun. In practice the duties envisioned for the DSC were covered by workers in the DEOs.

During December, the CEC and the Palestinian Authority repeatedly changed the election schedule. Important components of the election process, including the length of time for the campaign, the number of seats in the Council, the procedure and timetable for registering voters and the schedule for registering candidates, were abruptly altered several times without public explanation. While many of these adjustments were made to promote greater participation in the elections, they also created substantial confusion for candidates and voters. Election officials noted that they had difficulty responding to all of the fluctuating procedures.

In the weeks leading up to the elections, Palestinian officials expressed concern about Israeli bureaucratic obstacles to the transfer of election materials from Jericho to the Gaza Strip at the Erez checkpoint and to the provision of necessary travel permits to qualified Palestinian electoral officials. At the same time, cooperation between Israel and the PA was evident in the smooth process for reviewing voter lists.

**Voter Registration: Overview**

NDI/Carter Center's first pre-election delegation coincided with the beginning of the voter registration process. One of the main purposes of the November 10, 1995 mission was to gauge this first important test of the election administration. On the whole, the NDI/Carter Center monitoring team noted a remarkable enthusiasm for the voter registration process throughout Palestinian society. Even those political movements that were skeptical about the elections and/or opposed to the peace process encouraged Palestinians to register to vote although they hesitated about whether to encourage their supporters to vote. The commitment and resourcefulness of election officials, including teachers who were responsible for the voter registration canvass, were impressive.

A number of factors complicated the registration process. First, no reliable census data corresponded to constituencies in the Palestinian electoral system. For this reason, the CEC decided to implement a comprehensive canvass-style voter registration process to help ensure a higher registration rate. Second, the Interim Agreement specified that Israel would have the right to review the electoral registry and raise objections to any entry that did not appear in Israel's population registry. Israel included this provision in the agreement to
prevent Israeli citizens of Arab origin from voting and to ensure that the election process would not include Palestinians living outside of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Israeli officials suggested a third reason for this provision: to create a definitive list of Palestinians living in the territories as official residents of the West Bank and Gasa Strip. The Israeli review meant that Palestinian officials had first to register their voters and then respond to Israeli queries on any registry entry. Aside from its logistical difficulties, the review offered a side benefit: it heightened the integrity of the voter lists.

The third complicating factor was time. The CEC originally envisioned a seven-week period to conduct the door-to-door registration. In October, when Arafat and Peres announced that elections would be held in January, the CEC faced a drastically compressed time frame. The Interim Agreement specified that the election campaign would begin 22 days before polling day. The CEC’s goal was to complete the final voter registry by the beginning of the campaign so that candidates would have necessary information about voters in their constituency. In order to meet this goal, the CEC reduced the period allotted for the door-to-door canvassing from six weeks to three. This change was the first of many that would occur before the completion of the electoral registry. The NDI/Carter Center monitoring team noted that, ultimately, the CEC succeeded in preparing a registry that passed Israeli review and included the vast majority of eligible Palestinians.

The voter registration process began on November 12. The door-to-door canvassing lasted 20 days, ending on December 2. However, potential voters had the opportunity to register at district election offices through January as the voter registration period was extended several times. Voter registration was extended to accord soon-to-be-released prisoners an opportunity to register and to allow members of opposition movements the maximum amount of time to decide whether or not they would participate.

Canvassers asked each person older than 17 years for his or her Palestinian or Israeli identification card, and recorded the voter’s name, I.D. number, I.D. type (e.g., Palestinian or Israeli), father’s name, grandfather’s name, sex, date of birth and permanent address. Eligible voters were issued a temporary registration card to show to the polling station commission on election day. The name, location, and number of the polling station as well as the name of the constituency were included on this card, except in municipal

Jerusalem, where only the polling station number appeared on the card because the polling station locations for municipal Jerusalem were still pending. Family members who were not present—because of studies overseas, or a day job in Israel, for example—were often registered during the canvass. In most cases, officials would accept the name of an absent person if the family could furnish his or her I.D. number. The fact that most canvassers were from the area and knew the people they registered facilitated the process.

The canvassers carried official identification issued by the CEC and wore caps that identified them as members of the polling station commission. They were to return to each residence up to three times to register all eligible voters in the household. If the third visit the canvasser was unable to register a household member, he or she would leave an official notice with the location of the district election office and the name of its president. The notice explained that the individual could register in person at the district election office.

Confirmation of identity for the canvass was based on Israeli identification cards possessed by most (but not all) Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Interim Agreement stipulated that certain Palestinians who did not hold proper identification documents could be added to the population register and obtain identity cards. Specifically, Annex II, Article II of the Interim Agreement provided that any person at least 40 years old as of January 1, 1996 who had lived in the West Bank and Gaza Strip continuously for at least three years (except for short absences) or any person under 40 who had lived in the West Bank and Gaza Strip continuously for four years would be entitled to an identity card. The Agreement also specified that applications by such individuals for identity cards would be dispatched on an expedited basis to hasten the registration process.

Despite the Interim Agreement’s emphasis on prompt processing, the mechanism for applying for identity cards was not established until the last week of the canvass (late November). The delay was due in part to complications arising from reaching agreement on who had the authority to grant identity documents in areas that had shifted from Israeli to Palestinian control. After several meetings, the Israeli-Palestinian Civil Affairs Coordination and Cooperation Committee (CAC) established an application procedure. To obtain identity cards, individuals meeting the applicable criteria had to file applications at the CAC offices in Ramallah, Jericho or Jenin, or at the office of the
Population registry in Gaza City, before December 1995. The application, which had to be completed in English, Arabic and Hebrew, required a $100 fee. The applications were supposed to be reviewed by both sides of the CAC and processed in time for individuals to register before the close of the registration period. Although some PA officials expected upward of 20,000 such requests for I.D.s, only about 4,000 were submitted. Both Palestinian and Israeli officials reviewed the applications. The Israeli side rejected a few cases for reasons stipulated in the agreement—either for holding an Israeli passport or for failing to meet residency requirements.

In mid-December, concern arose about announcements placed in major newspapers by the Ministry of Interior that notified Palestinians that they would have to present their temporary voters registration card in order to obtain a passport. Several members of NDI's local staff verified that signs were posted in the passport office of the Ministry of Interior outlining this procedure. Many Palestinians felt that registering to vote was a personal choice and should not be required by the PA. Soon after these issues were raised with the CEC and the PA, the CEC instructed the Ministry of Interior to drop its requirement that passport applicants furnish a voter registration card.

Two weeks later the Ministry abandoned this conclusion. Some serious problems were reported from Jerusalem during the canvas period, most of which stemmed from the city's contested status. The Jerusalem election district comprised municipal Jerusalem (the area that Israel annexed) and surrounding towns in the West Bank. The Interim Agreement allowed Palestinian residents of Jerusalem to vote but it did not identify municipal Jerusalem as an electoral area for the Palestinian elections. As a result, the Palestinian Central Election Commission did not have jurisdiction in municipal Jerusalem. And as such, the CEC was barred from conducting voter registration there.

Instead, by agreement with Israel, the CEC contracted with B'riahmiyya College, a secondary school in East Jerusalem, to register Palestinians in Jerusalem. B'riahmiyya College was responsible for recruiting and training teachers and students to conduct the registration and for implementing the program. CEC posters and literature could not be used in municipal Jerusalem, and registration forms had to be reprinted without the CEC logo. Outside of the municipal boundaries, the CEC opened an office for the districts of Jerusalem, which oversaw registration of voters outside of the city and supervised the work of B'riahmiyya College.

Since Israeli passport holders were not permitted to vote in the Palestinian elections, some Jerusalem residents reportedly feared losing their valued Jerusalem identification documents (and the right to travel and work in Israel) as well as eligibility for an Israeli passport if they registered to vote. Likewise, Palestinians living in Jerusalem, but carrying a West Bank or Gaza I.D., might have hesitated to register for fear of being discovered and forced to leave. Additionally, it is not uncommon for a Jerusalemite to marry someone from the West Bank or Gaza, and for the spouse to be denied a Jerusalem I.D. There are many people living in the West Bank who hold Jerusalem I.D.s, as well as many others living in Jerusalem without a Jerusalem I.D. The former might have had misgivings that registration in their place of abode (outside Jerusalem) would jeopardize their Jerusalem I.D.; in the latter case, the spouse without a Jerusalem I.D. might have feared being forced to leave him or her family in Jerusalem. Furthermore, between 60,000 and 86,000 Palestinians with Jerusalem I.D.s who live just outside the municipality of Jerusalem (beyond the Israeli checkpoints) might also have feared that registration could prompt Israeli authorities to revoke their I.D.s.

At the outset, the canvas in municipal Jerusalem faced a number of difficulties. First, B'riahmiyya College encountered some organizational problems. Some of the B'riahmiyya students who had been trained later dropped out of the program, so new canvassers had to be recruited and trained. Also B'riahmiyya was supposed to establish an office in East Jerusalem to coordinate activities, but Israeli Defense Forces closed the office two days after it opened, according to the Jerusalem district manager. As a result, registration inside Jerusalem was directed from the district election office, which initially had been responsible for registration only outside of the municipality. Furthermore, the Jerusalem district office opened later (October 4) than any of the other offices, and it had considerably less time than other DEOs to organize and staff the branch. Jerusalem registrars also started one or two days late because of printing delays necessitated by having to prepare special registration materials without the CEC logo. For these reasons, several areas in municipal Jerusalem were not
distributed during the door-to-door canvassing, that his or her name had been removed from the registry and hence that he or she was ineligible to vote until he or she arrived at the polls to vote on election day.

CEC officials aimed to complete the electoral registry by the commencement of the campaign period. However, the sustained Israeli review process and the CEC's desire to keep open registration as long as possible to accommodate late entries made it impossible to complete the electoral registry by this time. In late December, the CEC decided to establish a supplementary list. This decision allowed the CEC to publish a nearly complete registry on or near the opening of the campaign, while buying more time to include new entries and to correct those entries at variance with the Israeli population registry.

The Central Election Commission reported on January 2, 1996, that 1,013,235 eligible voters had registered: 665,603 in the West Bank including East Jerusalem and 347,632 in the Gaza Strip. Of the registered voters eligible to vote, about 49 percent were women and 51 percent men. About 35,000 of the original 1,048,756 registrants were not going to reach the age of 18 before January 20, and thus were disqualified from voting. When the CEC released final voter registration figures it was remarkable that the total number of eligible voters dropped below 1 million, a disparity of approximately 10 percent from the original January 2 announcement that has never been explained by the CEC.

In general, international observers deemed the voter registration canvass successful, despite some delays in Jerusalem. (See Appendix A.) Moreover, the Palestinian Domestic Monitoring Committee (PDMC), a coalition of Palestinian NGOs, conducted a canvass of 760 randomly selected houses in 10 of the 11 West Bank electoral districts and determined that most eligible voters did have an opportunity to register. The PDMC found that problems existed with voter registration in Jerusalem and recommended that the registration period be extended. It is also notable that during the canvass apparently no political parties criticized polling station officials for acting in a partisan manner.
Partisan Entity Registration

The election law governing the first Palestinian elections contained no provision for registering political parties. Although the PA spent considerable time drafting and negotiating a political party law, it abandoned the effort in late 1995. Unable to reach a broad consensus on the law and under significant time pressure to meet deadlines in order to hold the elections in January 1996, the PA opted to include provisions for the registration of "partisan entities" in the election law. Originally, a draft law would have required partisan entities to register with the Central Election Commission, but the PA subsequently altered this provision to require partisan entities to register with the PA Ministry of Interior.

According to Article 49 of the Palestinian Election Law, to register as a partisan entity, an organization had to submit its name, symbol, motto, director's name, leadership structure, a summary of its political and social program, and a signed document stating that the entity did not advocate racism. Although the Interim Agreement required Israeli authorities to review candidate registration applications to ensure that candidates had renounced violence and racism, in the end this procedure was not followed. The election law also required financial disclosures from registered partisan entities and prohibited them from receiving financial contributions from abroad.

According to the original schedule, registration of partisan entities occurred from December 8 to 16, 1995, but in practice registration remained open in order to allow political factions such as Hamas the chance to register as partisan entities up to the last minute. The Ministry of Interior did not deny registration to any partisan entity.

Candidate Registration

While the second NDC/Carter Center pre-election mission sought to assess the overall political climate in which the election preparations were proceeding, it also coincided with the beginning of the candidate registration period. The December 10 to 16 delegation examined the extent to which the following procedures and rules were followed. (See Appendix B.)

Annex II of the Interim Agreement stipulates that any Palestinian wishing to be a candidate for Council: had to be a registered voter at least 30 years old on polling day; had to reside in the constituency in which she or he chose to run; and could not "commit or advocate racism" or "pursue the implementation of their aims by unlawful or non-democratic means." According to the election law, a candidate for the Council had to be nominated by a registered "partisan entity" or obtain the signatures of 500 voters within the district in which he or she was running for office. Council candidates paid a $1,000 deposit to the PA Ministry of Finance, which was refundable only to the winners. According to the election law, employees of the PA had to resign their positions after becoming a candidate for the Council, although these resignations did not occur in all cases.

The candidate registration process also experienced a dizzying array of changes, most of which were political. (See Appendix C.) For example, candidate registration was scheduled to end on December 22 at 3:30 p.m. District Election Officers reportedly received calls during the afternoon of the 22nd telling them to extend the deadline by 24 hours. The next day, a second call asks for an extension until midnight. While part of the reason for the delay appears to stem from a desire to accommodate a possible last-minute change of heart by Hamas, some Palestinians complained that these extensions were intended to provide more time to Fatah in areas where it had not yet submitted candidates.

The election law stipulated that nominations for the Council were to be submitted to the appropriate DEC, located in each of the 16 districts. Because the DECs had not formed, applications were submitted to the DEOs instead. Candidate registration began on December 14 and continued until December 31, 1995. The closing date for candidate nominations was extended a number of times. In the end, more than 670 candidates registered for the Council, but some of these later withdrew shortly before the elections.

Nominations for Ra'ees were to have been submitted to the CEC, but because the PA appointed the CEC at such a late date, nominations were submitted to the Jericho DEO, which was located in the same building as the acting CEC. A provisional list of nominations was posted three days following the close of the registration process, after which two days were allotted for public review and appeal.

According to the election law, a candidate for Ra'ees: had to be a registered voter at least 35 years old on election day; had to be a resident of the West Bank or Gaza Strip; and could not "commit or advocate racism" or "pursue the implementation of their aims by..."
Palestinians believed that the quota applied only for those who registered to run for the Christian seats and that Christian candidates could also choose to run for the "regular" seats. However, as election day approached, the CEC provided a "restrictive" interpretation of the quota. For instance, no more than two Christians could win seats in the Bethlehem district, even if the top four candidates with the most votes were Christian.

The draft election law stated that seats would be allocated according to the voter registration figures, but this scheme changed on December 7, 1995, when the final election law stipulated seat allocation according to population distribution. Inequalities in the allocation of seats provoked anger in some quarters. Political leaders in Nablus, for example, objected to the fact that Nablus had only one seat for every 13,900 voters while the average was 8,800 in Khan Younis.

This allocation change resulted in part from pressure from Gaza political leaders for more seats in Gaza. Residents of the Gaza Strip were concerned that distributing seats on the basis of voter registration figures would underrepresent districts in the Gaza Strip because the Gaza Strip comprised a greater proportion of residents under the age of 18. Also, Palestinian leaders in Jerusalem, including PA Minister without Portfolio Faisal Husseini, the PA's leading official in Jerusalem, feared that the initial low turnout for voter registration in Jerusalem would lead to an underrepresentation of Palestinians in the Jerusalem district.

Ultimately, the distribution of seats was not strictly based on registration or population figures. The absence of accurate and agreed-upon population data meant that the decision to shift the basis for allocating seats from voter registration figures to population figures essentially opened the process of seat allocation to political consideration and negotiation among Palestinians.

Elections in Jerusalem

Special arrangements were made for voting in Jerusalem. The final status of that part of Jerusalem annexed by Israel following the 1967 Six-Day War is to be resolved in the next phase of the negotiations following Palestinian elections. More than 120,000 Palestinians live in East Jerusalem and can claim Israeli citizenship under Israeli law. While some have exercised this option, most have
to enable residents to participate but preclude any suggestion that the final status of East Jerusalem had been sealed or compromised.

Conclusion

The Palestinian electoral framework unfolded in a seemingly high-handed fashion with many important decisions being made and revised up to election day, an issue which was noted with concern by the second NDI/Carder Center pre-election mission in December. Delays in promulgating the election law and appointing the CEC and Election Appeals Court, and changes in timetables for registering candidates and voters combined to potentially thwart the electoral process. Even the January 20 election date was not made official until the second week of December when Yasir Arafat issued a decree formalising the date. That announcement prompted some political leaders, including the head of the Palestinian delegation to the Madrid negotiations, Haidar Abdull Shit, to advocate postponing the elections to allow for further discussion about the electoral system and more time for political preparations. The Palestinian Authority defended the January election date, arguing it was necessary to ensure Israeli adherence to the redeployment schedule and to minimise any unforeseen security problems that could jeopardise elections from taking place.

While the PA made late changes to the electoral system and registration procedures, these changes were never fully explained to the public, resulting in confusion and some dissatisfaction among Palestinians. As discussed above, the primary motivation for these changes was apparently to provide political factions maximum time to decide whether or not to participate in the elections.

Because of the unique nature of these elections, difficulties arose in coordination between Israel and the PA. For example, Israeli security measures hindered the movement of Palestinian election officials between the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the course of their work. Restrictions on travel also impeded the transport of election materials between the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In some cases, hundreds of boxes had to be physically carried across the Erez checkpoint. Journalists and civic and voter education trainers also encountered difficulties travelling between the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Ambiguity among many Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem about whether their residency rights would be affected by participation in the elections were partially alleviated in January by public
statements by Israeli and Palestinian officials. In addition, there was confusion among voters in East Jerusalem as to where they should vote and Israeli-Palestinian negotiations did not resolve this issue until the eve of the elections.

As noted by the NDI/Carter Center December pre-election mission, the vast majority of election workers and mid-level Palestinian election officials approached their work with a strong commitment to successfully administering the electoral process. They responded to late changes in the system and last-minute decisions with solutions, and worked long hours to fulfill the many tasks associated with holding elections. This broad-based commitment to holding elections is a positive sign for the potential for democracy in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Chapter 3

The Campaign and Pre-election Environment

Last-minute preparations and ad hoc decisions regarding the electoral framework were just a few factors that shaped and influenced the immediate pre-election environment and election campaign for the first Palestinian elections. For Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the new year began with a flurry of activity, as an already frenzied political environment shifted into a higher level of activity.

Ultimately, all prominent opposition movements—Hamas, Islamic Jihad, PFLP, DFLP—decided not to participate⁸, but none of them attacked the electoral process or undertook any acts of violence that

⁸ Of the four movements, DFLP was the only one that called for an active boycott of the elections. The other movements merely stated that they would not officially participate but also would not prevent their supporters from voting in the elections.
would have harmed voters. Public interest in and political activity around the elections remained high throughout the campaign and pre-election period. A public opinion poll conducted by CPRS in early December 1995 indicated that more than 71 percent of those polled intended to vote, even if the opposition called for an election boycott. Candidates, including some who were affiliated with those opposition movements that had officially decided not to participate, held rallies, took part in debates and produced campaign spots on television and radio in attempts to vie for voter attention. At the same time, scattered incidents of intimidation by PA security forces and episodes of violence between Israelis and Palestinians tainted an atmosphere of widespread, open dialogue among candidates and voters. This chapter reviews the electoral campaign, the role of the Palestinian political movements in the electoral process and the general pre-election environment.

Factional Affiliation

The lack of differentiation between candidates about the most important and pressing issues constituted one of the most notable characteristics of the campaign for the first Palestinian elections. In this delicate transitional period, many Palestinian leaders were reluctant to clearly differentiate their individual political factions from the larger umbrella PA movement, choosing to remain united during negotiations with Israel. In the face of continued negotiations, candidates representing a broad spectrum of perspectives campaigned largely on questions related to final status negotiations with Israel. Most candidates supported the creation of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, the removal of Israeli settlements from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the right of return for Palestinian refugees. In addition to taking a strong posture on “final status” issues, candidates typically made promises to increase economic opportunities, improve the educational system, provide better services and institute a more responsive government. The focus, however, remained on questions of more emotional issues of Palestinian statehood, Jerusalem, Israeli settlements and Palestinian refugees.

With little variation among the candidates on the issues, candidates distinguished their appeal to voters by emphasizing their personal qualifications, family/dynastic ties and political connections. In these elections, an individual candidate’s affiliation with the larger Palestinian political movement counted more than the candidate’s association with a particular “political entity.” Although the election law established a mechanism by which “political entities” registered with the Ministry of Interior, more often than not these partisan entities were small, newly formed groups without broad-based support.

In these first elections, approximately 75 percent of the candidates officially ran as independents. The remaining 25 percent registered as candidates of one of the partition entities. (See Appendix I.) The 676 candidates contesting these elections fell into one of the following categories: (1) official Fatah list candidates; (2) independent candidates historically affiliated with Fatah who did not obtain a spot on the official list; (3) independent candidates who did not seek inclusion on the Fatah list; and (4) candidates from partition entities other than Fatah.

Official Fatah Candidates

The official Fatah (which is the Arabic acronym for the name of the movement, the Palestinian National Liberation Movement) candidates proved the most influential and prominent in the elections, ultimately winning the most seats. Established in 1959 and headed by PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, Fatah gained fame as a small guerrilla organization that conducted attacks against Israeli civilian and military targets in the 1960s and 1970s. In the late 1980s, Fatah grew more conciliatory and eventually called for a diplomatic compromise with Israel. Throughout the Israeli occupation, Fatah remained an important political force in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as well as in the PLO and the Palestinian diaspora community.

Since 1989, Fatah has been the primary advocate within the PLO for achieving peace with Israel, and as the Fatah-dominated PA established itself on the ground in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, its popularity gradually increased in 1994 and 1995. According to polls conducted by the CPRS in Nablus, support for Fatah in the West Bank and Gaza Strip rose from 41 percent in November 1991 to 55 percent in December 1995 (less than a 3 percent margin of error). Conversely, the popularity of Hamas, the strongest opposition movement in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, fell during the same period. In a November 1993 CPRS poll, support for Hamas hovered around 15 percent, which fell to roughly 10 percent by December 1995.
Increased Fatah support combined with declining popular sentiment for Hamas demonstrated Arafat's apparent success in consolidating popular support in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

During November and December 1995, local Fatah committees conducted internal elections in each constituency to compose candidate lists for the elections. After the caucuses, the local committees sent those lists, which had twice as many candidates as there were seats for each constituency to Fatah's Central Committee, led by Arafat. The Central Committee then selected the final Fatah list.

According to informed observers, the caucus results created a dilemma for Arafat. He had to choose between two well-known Fatah figures from the same clan, Dalal Al-Zeer and Salih Al-Tamam. Rather than endorsing one at the expense of alienating the other, Arafat and Fatah's Central Committee decided to leave open the fourth and final slot on the list. Both Al-Zeer and Al-Tamam eventually ran as independents.

Independent Candidates Affiliated With Fatah

When Fatah's Central Committee announced its official list, it asked all Fatah supporters to honor the validity of commitments to these factional lists and to ensure total support for them. Further, the Central Committee stated, "We are asking the brothers and sons of the Fatah movement who are running as independents to withdraw their candidacies or face the consequences of going against party regulations." There was a great deal of disappointment among those who had been selected in the local caucuses, but found out later that they did not make the final list.

The official list announced prompted two separate responses from Fatah members. Some Fatah sympathizers chose to defy the order of Fatah's Central Committee and ran as independents. Some Fatah supporters ran as independents. Some supported Fatah. Indeed, most of these candidates were life-long members of Fatah and did not want to forget the opportunity to stand in these historic elections. They felt a strong attachment to the movement, and even though rejected by Fatah's leadership, they maintained a high degree of loyalty to Fatah. Although the Fatah leadership discouraged these candidacies, many continued their campaigns. For example, Jamil Al-Tariti, PA Minister for Civil Affairs and a Fatah activist in Ramallah who did not make Fatah's list,
continued to campaign and promised to align himself with Fatah if he won a seat on the Council.

In some cases, certain elements of the PA (which Fatah dominated), used stronger methods to discourage independent, unofficial Fatah candidates. Abdal Ja'wel Mahmoud El-Bir, an independent candidate in Jish, said that Fatah's official candidates suffered a long history of activism in the movement, also continued his campaign. Al-Bir claimed that Palestinian security agents attempted to intimidate him several times to withdraw in favor of the official Fatah candidate, Ahmed El-Diek. Al-Bir also said that Fatah leaders threatened to rescind his membership in Fatah if he did not withdraw from the race. Al-Bir ultimately lost to the candidate hand-picked by Fatah's Central Committee. In the same district, three other independent candidates who presented themselves as supporters of Fatah withdrew shortly before the election after reportedly receiving promises of jobs and money from Fatah leaders in the PA.

Independent Candidates Not Affiliated With Fatah

Some candidates not chosen for Fatah's final list angrily responded by breaking their ties with the movement and running as true independents. For instance, Hikmat Hashim Luma Zeid, the former governor of Jish and long-time Fatah member, fared well in the local caucuses, ranking high among the other Fatah candidates. When Fatah's Central Committee excluded Zeid from the official roster, he decided to run as an independent opposed to Fatah and campaigned actively against Fatah's sanctioned list. This tactic worked well for Zeid, who became one of the two non-Fatah list candidates elected to a seat in the Jenin constituency. Some observers believe that the large number of Fatah members who broke ranks to run as independents indicates Fatah's domination in the election. A total of seven candidates ran on the NDC's slate, including Abu Isam, a prominent FPLP activist, registered as a candidate in Gaza City after the PFLP decided not to participate. Abu Isam, also running in Gaza City, won the new party's only seat.

The Palestinian Democratic Union (FIDA), a splinter group of the DFLP supportive of the peace process, registered as a political party and nominated a number of candidates. FIDA is led by Yasser Arafat, a PLO leader and a close advisor to Arafat, running on the list for the candidate, Fida. He was seen as the PA. A Fatah campaigner and
did not seek endorsements from the official Fatah candidates. He also did not withdraw from the race. Al-Bir ultimately lost to the candidate hand-picked by Fatah's Central Committee. In the same district, three other independent candidates who presented themselves as supporters of Fatah withdrew shortly before the election after reportedly receiving promises of jobs and money from Fatah leaders in the PA.

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the political leader, Ashrawi did not need factional backing to bolster his candidacy.

Other Partisan Entities Running Candidates

A number of officially registered partisan entities nominated candidates for the Council and did not seek endorsements from the Fatah leadership. Next to Fatah, possibly the most organized partisan entity was the Palestine People's Party (PPP), which ran candidates in 12 of the 16 constituencies. However, despite PPP's strong organization, cohesive structure and several highly visible candidates, it faltered to win a single seat. Traditionally, PPP's decision to run more than one candidate in several constituencies appears to have diluted its support.

Another prominent partisan entity was the National Democratic Coalition (NDC), led by Haddad Abdal Shafi. Abdal Shafi, former head of the Palestinian delegation to the Madrid and Washington peace talks, formed the NDC in hopes of creating a broad-based movement and a credible alternative to Fatah. In the months before the elections, Abdal Shafi unsuccessfully sought to broaden his coalition by inviting other secular elites of Arafat like Hannah Ashrawi and political leaders from the DFLP and PFLP to join the NDC and to form a rival bloc opposed to Fatah's dominance of the elections. A total of seven candidates ran on the NDC's slate. Abu Isam, a prominent FPLP activist, registered as a candidate in Gaza City after the PFLP decided not to participate. Arafat, also running in Gaza City, won the new party's only seat.

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Formerly the Palestinian Communist Party, this party re-established itself after the end of the Cold War in 1991 as a leftist party under the new name of the Palestinian People's Party. Unlike other leftist factions such as the DFLP and PFLP, the PPP accepts the agreements that the PLO made with Israel and aims to serve as a leftist alternative to Fatah. PPP's support, according to CPS polls, was less than 5 percent in December 1995.

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A few Islamist movements participated in the elections: the Islamic Jihad/Al-Aqsa Brigades and the Islamic Struggle Movement. The Al-Aqsa Brigades were formed in 1995 by a group of Islamic personalities who seceded from Islamic Jihad in 1995. While Al-Aqsa supported the peace accords and Arafat, Islamic Jihad fully rejects the Oslo agreements and did not participate in the elections. Not one of the five candidates registered under the Al-Aqsa Brigades banner (four in the Gaza Strip and one in the West Bank) won a seat on the Council. The Islamic Struggle Movement, a small group that accepted the Oslo peace process, fielded two candidates in the Gaza Strip but also failed to win representation on the Council.

A curious phenomenon occurred during the partisan entity registration process: a few newly formed parties registered as partisan entities but decided against nominating candidates. For instance, on December 24, 1995, the Islamic National Union Party (INUP) held a press conference to announce its establishment as a registra tion as a partisan entity, INUP spokesman Mahmoud Al-Habbash called on Palestinians to participate in the elections, but stated that due to “technical reasons” the INUP would not field any candidates.

Similarly, the Islamic National Salvation Party (INSP), led by Jami’l Abu Sta’ihan, registered as a partisan entity but did not compete in the elections. Expectations were that if the PA-Hamas negotiations led to Hamas participation in the elections, Hamas might run candidates under the INSP.

Women Candidates


Ghada Zaghayar, head of the Jerusalem Center for Women, offered one explanation for the low number of women candidates. In the February 2, 1996 issue of the Jerusalem Media and Communication Center’s Palestine Report, Zaghayar explained that “women were deterred from running by financial restrictions, by the cumbersome system which allowed only a few seats in each region, and by the patriarchal nature of society which bars women from decision-making positions.” The constituency-based majoritarian system that favored traditional elements of Palestinian society—the patriarchal family and the clan—was another commonly cited reason for few female candidates. Four women were ultimately elected to the Council: one each from Jerusalem, Nablus, Gaza City and Deir Al-Balah.

The Immediate Pre-election Political Environment

The political environment in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in late December 1995 and the first weeks of January 1996 was not less volatile than it had been at any other time in the peace process. Isolated incidents of violence continued, and many observers questioned whether the elections might be disrupted by radical Palestinian or Israeli groups. Some events during the pre-election period raised serious concern about the overall climate for human rights, open debate and rule of law. Authoritarian tendencies of the PA reappeared a number of times in December and January, as the PA detained without charge opposition figures, journalists and human rights advocates. As a result of these incidents, many question the commitment of the PA’s 100 officials to observing democratic values and safeguarding a fair election process. The Palestinian public and international observers grew increasingly concerned about the role of the PA’s security forces and their potential for compromising fair electoral competition.

PA security forces have expanded considerably since the establishment of the PA in 1994. During the year leading up to the Palestinian elections, human rights organizations such as B’Tselem and Human Rights Watch recorded numerous instances of arbitrary detention and sometimes deaths attributed to detention by PA security forces. These detentions continued in December and January, and drew the attention of the international community as election day neared. On December 7, 1995, the Palestinian Authority detained Eyad Sarraj, the head of the sum-official Palestine Independent Commission on Citizens Rights, and also director of the Gaza Strip Community Mental Health Program. Sarraj was arrested after delivering a speech in which he faulted PA Attorney General Khalef Al-Kidrah with failure to respond to one of the more than 400 cases of human rights violations reported to him by the Palestinian
Independent Commission on Citizens Rights, Sarraj was released without charge after spending 12 hours in custody.

The second NDI/Carter Center pre-election assessment mission voiced its strong concern about the detention of Sarraj in a meeting with Yasser Arafat on December 12 in Gaza. The delegation urged the PA to respond to the charges of human rights violations that Sarraj had reported to the attorney general. Arafat replied that Sarraj’s charges were baseless and slanderous, and that he had reluctantly ordered Sarraj’s release. Also during the mission, the delegation met with Sarraj who discussed the work of the Palestinian Independent Commission on Citizens Rights to help protect human rights under the PA. The delegation publicly called for a full response by the PA’s attorney general to the requests of the Independent Commission and others for an investigation of human rights violations.

On December 25, the Palestinian Preventive Security Forces detained Maher Al-‘Amri, a journalist with the daily Al-Quds newspaper, and held him in Jericho. Apparently, Al-‘Amri was detained because he refused to follow a directive from the PA to run a story describing a meeting between Yasser Arafat and the Greek Orthodox patriarch of Jerusalem on the front page. The story (which did run inside the paper) reported the patriarch’s flattering comparison of Arafat with the Muslim Caliph Cisar Al-Khatib, who conquered Jerusalem in the sixth century. Al-‘Amri was released a number of days following complaints from Palestinian NGOs and members of the international community. While several international observer groups issued public statements condemning this overt intimidation, the incident served to strengthen self-censorship among the Palestinian press. Only one Palestinian paper, An-Nahar, reported Al-‘Amri’s detention.

Several days later, on January 2, Palestinian Security detained Bassam ‘Eid, both a correspondent with Reporters sans Frontières, an international organization that monitored the Palestinian media, and a staff member with B’Tselem, an Israeli human rights organization. ‘Eid was apparently detained because of his public calls for the release of Al-‘Amri. International and local denouncements facilitated the release of ‘Eid on January 3. NDI/Carter Center’s third pre-election monitoring statement, released on the same day, also urged the PA to release ‘Eid and Al-‘Amri.

These detentions, coupled with reports of incidents of intimidation against non-Fatah candidates and campaign workers, caused many observers to question whether or not the PA and Yasser Arafat were serious about establishing democratic, representative self-rule. Intransigent overt pressure on candidates and journalists characterized the immediate pre-election period. Elements in the PA and its security forces clearly used their control of public resources to favor Fatah and Fatah-endorsed candidates.

According to possible election-day violence grew with the January 5 murder in the Gaza Strip of Hamas member Yehya Ayesh, known as the “engineer,” long sought by Israeli for her role in directing several suicide bombings against Israeli civilians. Ayesh’s assassination, reportedly by Israeli forces, led to a massive outpouring of anti-Israeli sentiment. Palestinians from across the spectrum united to mourn his death—a phenomenon best exhibited by Yasser Arafat’s embrace of condolences of a senior Hamas leader in the Gaza Strip, a photo of which was carried on the front page of every Palestinian newspaper the next day.

The assassination increased Palestinian doubt about the significance of elections without full autonomy from Israel. Despite several threats, no movements or individual candidates withdrew from the electoral process as a result of the assassination, and participation on election day remained high. Many Palestinians and most Israelis feared that Hamas would retaliate by attacking Israel, thus jeopardizing the elections, in the short term, and the peace negotiations, in the longer term. The declaration of the 40-day mourning period for Ayesh alleviated this apprehension to a certain extent, and retaliation seemed less likely before the January 20 elections. While Hamas publicly declared that it would retaliate against Israel for the assassination, it also announced that it would not undermine Arafat, the PA and particularly the electoral process by conducting such attacks before the elections. Hamas resumed its bombings in February and March 1996.

The Ayesh assassination immediately influenced the campaign when the Israeli government issued closure orders for the West Bank and Gaza Strip on January 8. The border closure affected Jerusalem candidates in particular as campaigning became even more difficult in and around Jerusalem.
Despite the profusion of candidates, real political competition was scarce as platforms demonstrated little diversity. Most candidates campaigned on promises of Palestinian statehood, the removal of settlements from the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the status of Jerusalem as a Palestinian capital—all issues over which they would exert no influence if elected to the PLC. Voters supported candidates based on family or clan affiliation, and their reputation in the Palestinian cause, noting who had fought for the “movement,” been imprisoned by the Israelis, or led the “struggle” from outside.

Ra'ees candidates Yasser Arafat and Samiha Khatib exhibited one of the more striking differences in candidate positions. Khalil, a 72-year-old widow, head of the Family Nourishment Society and the general secretary of the General Union of Palestinian Women, campaigned for the cancellation of the PLO’s agreements with Israel.

Several candidates from partisan entities such as FIDA and PPP complained that PA officials were using PA resources to support Fateh candidates. According to Article 14 of the election law, officials of the Palestinian Authority “may not be nominated as candidates unless they renounce their offices at least 10 days before the date fixed for the publication of the final lists of candidates…” Although most candidates resigned from office, Yasser Arafat asked four officials to remain in office throughout the campaign.

International election observers expressed concern that several PA officials were using PA resources such as cars, offices and telephones to support their campaigns. One candidate in Gaza City, who was also an officer in the security forces, employed troops under his command to distribute campaign leaflets and posters. The CEC responded expeditiously to prohibit this candidate from using troops to support his campaign activities.

Questions were also raised about the partisan use of resources by the Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation (PBC) to bolster Arafat’s candidacy and those of Fateh candidates. The director of the PBC publicly endorsed Marwan Kanafani, Arafat’s spokesman, and an independent candidate for the Council. Conversely, Saeed Erakat, Fatah candidate, former head of the Commission on Elections and Local Government and PLO deputy chief negotiator, actively sought to minimize his public profile in order to avoid the perception that he was using his official PA position to unfairly promote his candidacy. He declined to meet with foreign dignitaries during the campaign.
period and conducted negotiations with his Israeli counterpart only at night, away from the media spotlight. The NDJ/Carter Center December pre-election mission publicly urged equitable access to the media for all candidates, and stated that news coverage by the PBC should reflect balance and fairness.

The unique status of Hebron and East Jerusalem led to misunderstandings between Israelis and Palestinians. In January, the IDF arrested an independent candidate who raised a Palestinian flag over his downtown headquarters in Hebron, which was located within an area totally controlled by Israel. Voters in Hebron reportedly perceived the arrest as an example of Israeli interference, and the Fatah-list candidates in Hebron threatened to withdraw from the elections if he was not released.

The ambiguity and last-minute publication of the negotiated agreements for the electoral process in Jerusalem increased tensions surrounding the elections in the city. Many candidates and election officials did not know which sites had been designated for displaying campaign posters or holding rallies; on more than one occasion Israeli police interrupted a rally, and informed campaign organizers and supporters that the venue was not on the approved list of campaign sites. Other aspects of campaigning were vague or ill-defined. Frequent confrontations between Palestinians and Israeli soldiers during the campaign period occurred at Israeli checkpoints around Jerusalem when cars with campaign stickers were stopped by Israeli soldiers and were not allowed to proceed unless the drivers removed the stickers. At times, the drivers were ticketed by the soldiers. The most public incident of this sort, which was also filmed by Palestinian television, involved Jerusalem candidate Hanan Ashrawi who was prevented from entering Jerusalem from Ramallah at the Ar-Ram checkpoint by Israeli soldiers because of the campaign stickers on her car. While Ashrawi asserted her right to campaign, the soldiers cited a municipal traffic regulation that details the types of stickers and decals permitted on cars in Jerusalem.

Conclusion

As candidates for the Ra‘ees and the Palestinian Council vied for votes in late December, the overall political environment leading up to election day on January 20, 1996 was filled with uncertainty. The PA’s arrests of human rights activists and journalists during this period were cause for concern, as many observers questioned whether this pattern of intimidation would continue at the polls. Sporadic incidents of violence in January—the killing of Yehya Ayesh in Gaza, the murder of Israeli soldiers in the West Bank, and the shooting of Palestinians who ignored a checkpoint at the West Bank town of Jenin—increased anxiety about safety and stability in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Within this environment of uncertainty, the candidates in these first Palestinian elections forged ahead and conducted as normal a campaign as was possible, given the constraints and difficulties of the broader political environment. Despite a handful of incidents of intimidation by the PA and misunderstandings between Israeli authorities and Palestinian candidates, the campaign for the first Palestinian elections provided all candidates with a fair opportunity to express their views and positions to the Palestinian public.
Chapter 4

Election Day

Although these were their first national elections, Palestinians were familiar with basic concepts of democratic elections, such as secrecy of the ballot, from their experiences with local government, union and student leadership elections. However, organizing these first national elections presented new challenges. In an over-changing environment and under a compressed election schedule, the system established to conduct balloting simultaneously across the territories worked remarkably well. On the whole, Palestinians, from district election officers who coordinated election preparations in each district to the school teachers who conducted the voter registration canvas and administered the polling, exhibited a great deal of commitment, perseverance and professionalism. Palestinian election officials responded creatively and flexibly to the many challenges resulting from last-minute changes.

Generally, on election day polling stations had the necessary materials on hand, pollworkers arrived on time and oversaw peaceful balloting. Palestinians cast secret ballots, voters understood how to vote, security personnel maintained polling station order, and pollworkers tallied ballots at the polling station level and delivered them to the district level.

However, in some cases, serious administrative and organizational problems arose, mostly as a result of the Palestinian Authority's decision to accelerate preparations for balloting in January. Most noteworthy of these problems involved overcrowding at many polling stations, which in some cases affected the presence and role of election-day security personnel and the secrecy of the ballot. While the NDI/Carter Center monitoring effort concluded that these problems did not jeopardize the results, it does believe that these issues should be addressed before Palestinians organize their next elections in order to improve the process and enhance popular confidence.

This chapter presents the general trends observed by the NDI/Carter Center delegation in most of the electoral districts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The NDI/Carter Center delegation divided into 20 teams that together visited about 250 polling sites—approximately 15 percent of all 1,696 polling stations. To record its observations for each polling station visited, the NDI/Carter Center teams completed election-day reporting forms developed in cooperation with the European Union (EU) monitoring effort. (See Appendix K.) In addition to the EU and the NDI/Carter Center delegations, all delegations coordinated by the EU also used these forms. Although this method of recording observations was by no means comprehensive, the reporting forms helped focus attention on certain issues and encouraged team members to note and document their observations, in a systematic way, throughout election day. By using the forms, delegates answered a standardized series of questions about each of their randomly selected polling site visits. These recorded observations later helped form the basis of a broader assessment of the entire electoral process.

As polling stations in refugee camps, cities and rural areas the teams asked questions regarding procedures and polling station operations. Throughout the day, the NDI/Carter Center teams telephoned in periodic reports to a central office established by the delegation in Jerusalem. This systematic method of recording observations enabled the entire team to assemble a more complete picture of election-day events than any one of the teams could have developed on its own.
In general, the Palestinian elections can be characterized as three distinct elections corresponding to the degree of self-government exercised in each of the three areas—Gaza Strip, the West Bank and East Jerusalem. At polling stations in the Gaza Strip, there were more problems of overcrowding at the polls and reports of more rigorous PA security personnel than there were in the West Bank. Polling in the West Bank occurred with fewer reports of violations of the election law and fewer irregularities involving security personnel. Finally, in East Jerusalem and a small portion of the West Bank city of Hebron special rules and procedures shaped the election-day environment. A large part of the Jerusalem electoral district remained under Israeli jurisdiction (the areas that Israel defines as municipal Jerusalem), and the Israeli Defense Force maintained a significant presence to protect Israeli settlers in a small portion of the city of Hebron. This chapter presents the particular challenges faced by voters in Hebron as part of the larger discussion on voting in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Because of the special arrangements made by the PLO and Israel for Palestinian elections in East Jerusalem and the unique challenges those arrangements created, this chapter separately discusses polling in the Jerusalem district.

Opening the Polls in the West Bank and Gaza Strip

The 1,696 polling station commissions (PSCs), composed primarily of school teachers, performed most of the work that made the elections an administrative success. A PSC's election-day responsibilities included preparing the polling booths, registering all candidate members, certifying the presence of necessary materials, verifying voter I.D.s, distributing ballots, overseeing the operation of the polling stations, counting ballots, and delivering results and prescribed materials to the district election office. In order to effectively perform their tasks, the PSC members attended a series of workshops organized by the European Union Technical Unit in coordination with the Central Election Commission. The three sets of workshops covered rules and procedures for the registration process, campaign period, and election-day balloting.

Most polling stations opened on time at 7:00 am or soon afterward. Even in the small number of polling stations that opened between 15 and 90 minutes late, ballot boxes were visible and locked, and polling stations had on hand all the necessary material and personnel. In only two of 250 polling stations in Ramallah (79, 88) were ballot box padlocks missing and needed to be purchased election-day morning. Broad, enthusiastic participation marked initial polling in most West Bank and Gaza Strip districts. In some districts, crowds formed well before the polls were open. PSC members oversaw election-day balloting with a high level of competence and professionalism while voters patiently waited to cast their ballots with excitement and anticipation.

Overcrowding at the Polls

Extensive overcrowding was observed at several polling stations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. On one level, the presence of large crowds represented a positive sign: the elections enjoyed broad support among the Palestinian public. On another level, the overcrowding led to delays in closing the polls and created a tense atmosphere at stations where the patience of voters waiting for hours wore thin. The primary cause for overcrowding was poor planning. In the rush to hold the elections in January, Palestinian election officials did not accurately gauge the length of time needed to process voters on election day. Also, although polling stations were supposed to be designed to process up to 1,000 voters, the physical size of many polling stations proved inadequate. The CEC often experienced difficulty identifying adequate sites for polling stations and assigned too many voters to some polling stations. This disparity was particularly evident in the Gaza Strip electoral districts where higher than expected turnout at several stations caused ballot boxes to reach maximum capacity by mid-day.

In addition to voters, the presence of polling station officials, international and domestic observers, and candidate agents also consumed much of the limited space allocated for polling stations. While candidates generally succeeded in recruiting observers to check the process, overcrowding hindered the ability of candidate agents to actually witness all or most of the process. In places such as in Tulkarem (45, 53), Rafah (13) and Gaza North (24, 47) several candidate agents were denied access to the process.

10 The constituency number after the name of a constituency identify the specific polling station(s) in which the referenced observation was made by a NDI/Carter Center team.
While domestic nonpartisan observers and candidate agents were usually present at the polling sites, overcrowding sometimes precluded them from gaining access inside the polling stations. This exclusion led to recriminations and suspicions, particularly by independent and opposition party agents. Because overcrowding was more acute in Gaza Strip, these suspicions were greater there.

In those instances when candidate agents did observe the process, their effectiveness was diminished by inadequate training. When asked to support their claims of alleged irregularities with details and to present tangible proof, most candidate agents could not document the incident adequately to verify their claims.

In some cases, voter congestion and close quarters compromised ballot secrecy. Difficulty in polling stations hampered efforts to separate voting booths (effectively, cardboard boxes that served as inadequate partitions) from each other and from the polling station commission, other observers, by highest candidate agents and the various security personnel in the polling stations. The lack of adequate partitions affected the Gaza Strip in particular. Additionally, the cardboard panels occasionally opened toward the center of the room, thus enabling everyone to easily watch voters make their selections. In several cases, such as in Khan Younis (94) and in Hebron (67), polling station commissions adjusted polling booths during the day to provide for greater ballot secrecy. Concern about the secrecy of the vote was noted in the following polling stations: Jericho (01, 02, 09), Hebron (05, 192), Bethlehem (08); Safait (05); Qalqilya (18, 20); Khan Younis (49, 94, 100); and Gaza North (19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 45, 47, 63, 73); and Rafah (08).

In some cases, ballot secrecy was also compromised by the manner in which assistance was provided to illiterate voters. While Palestinians enjoy one of the highest literacy rates in the Arab world, illiteracy, particularly in heavily rural or bedoun areas, posed difficulties on election day. Due to ambiguity in the law, there was a degree of confusion regarding the proper procedures for assisting illiterate voters by other polling station commission members or security personnel. Did illiterate voters help illiterate voters? And, how many illiterate voters could a single literate voter assist? The PSCs in areas heavily populated by bedouns, a group with an historically low rate of literacy, were}

inadequately prepared to address these questions especially in Khan Younis (40, 47, 90, 91, 94, 106), in Gaza North (20, 21, 45, 73) and in Jericho (02, 03, 13).

While illiterate voters were permitted to bring to the polling station someone they trusted to help them vote, it quickly became clear that this procedure was not sufficiently understood as illiterate voters arrived without a trusted friend or relative to assist them. Often they looked around the polling station and randomly selected anyone who was available to help them vote including election security personnel or candidate agents. In some instances one member of an extended family would vote for the majority of his or her family. In a few polling stations, candidate agents alleged that Fatah activists, not necessarily trusted family or friends, were voting for large numbers of illiterate people. Again, the overwhelmed polling station commission members were ill-prepared to adequately monitor assistance to illiterate voters especially at polling stations where entire families often entered the polling station together and waited inside for one another to vote. Security personnel, and in some cases polling station commission members, helped illiterates vote in Tulkarem (55), Jericho (01, 03, 14), Jerusalem (82), Hebron (125, 133, 145), Qalqilya (18), Khan Younis (51, 91, 106), Rafah (01) and Gaza North (21, 45, 73).

Candidate agents also reported a few instances of "faked illiteracy" whereby literate voters chose to feign illiteracy in order to assure family, tribe or community members that they voted for a particular candidate. Faked illiteracy was reported in Hebron (133) and in Bethlehem (08). It is not clear if these incidents stemmed from intimidation. Overburdened polling station commission personnel did not have the manpower to investigate such incidents.

The problem of overcrowding grew worse as the day progressed. In some cases, polling station commission members devised creative solutions to handle the overflow, such as allowing small groups of candidate agents to enter the polling station on a rotating basis, as in Gaza North (24) in the morning. In other cases, polling officials hailed any agents from entering the premises, which only further increased tensions and skepticism. Several candidate agents complained that only Fatah candidate agents were permitted to stay inside while others were denied access altogether. Those who were afforded only limited access such as in Gaza North (24) in the afternoon and in several polling stations in Khan Younis. In all these instances, the civil
police and election security personnel oversaw the implementation of  
several of the conditions of election security intervention were not  
upheld. In several instances, the role election security teams actually  
played on election day varied somewhat from the role described before  
the election and led to some complaints of intimidation. These  
complaints seemed to arise for two primary reasons. First, the  
procedures for security were not adequately publicized and understood  
by all those involved—the polling station commission members, the  
candidate agents, the international observers and the security personnel  
themselves. Second, overcrowding sometimes confused and obscured  
the role of election-day security personnel as they were increasingly  
called in to assist the polling station officials. In some cases, security  
officials served the function of de facto poll workers.

In more than a few cases both blue uniformed civil police and  
plain-clothed men with “election security” badges were seen inside  
polling stations throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Sometimes  
they actively engaged in administering the elections themselves and  
were seen trying to direct voters on how to vote. When questioned  
about their presence inside the polling station, they replied that they  
had been invited by the polling station commission chairmen to assist  
unofficially with crowd management. In some cases the polling station  
commission chairmen confirmed that security had been invited into the  
polling station, often several hours earlier. Elsewhere it was clear that  
the chairman had forgotten that the problem that security had been  
invited in to address had been solved and they were no longer needed  
inside. In other cases there appeared to be tension about the continued  
presence of security persons and a reluctance on the part of the  
election workers to request their departure.

Sometimes polling station officials had not invited security  
personnel inside the polling stations all at. In several polling stations  
in Gaza North and Gaza City, unwanted election security personnel  
inside the polling station responded with hostility to police questions  
from NDC/Carter Center teams about their presence. In at least two  
instances in the Gaza North election district, the chairmen quickly  
invited them to remain when observers asked why they were there.  
Occasionally security personnel insisted that they were needed to  
control an ongoing crowd problem. In Khan Younis (40), for example,  
confusion prevailed, and armed police helped sort out problems with  
a pollwatcher insisting police action as intimidating, and asserted that the heavy police participation  

was upsetting particularly when they were armed with automatic weapons reminiscent of Israeli occupation.

In Gaza North (24, 73) significant crowd control problems overwhelmed polling station officials. At 5:00 pm, police reinforcements arrived, successfully quelled the crowds and regained order. Election security personnel inside polling station 73 responded defensively and aggressively by questioning by international observers. Election security person 1419 later walked a voter to a polling booth and told him to vote for independent candidate Ghazi Abu Wardi. Once outside the premises, candidate agents from adjacent polling stations 24 and 73 told observers of significant interference by the election security personnel and by Fatah activists.

Also in Gaza North (20, 21), election security personnel ignored a polling station official who requested that they remove certain persons from the premises. Candidate agents at these adjacent polling stations asserted that candidates Abdul Rahman Hamad (Fatah) and Khader Hamoudeh (independent) were telling people in the polling stations to vote for them. The chairman in both cases told the agents to speak with the security personnel to remove the candidates from the premises. When candidate agent Maher Fuad Mahmoud al-Madhoun addressed the lieutenant in charge, the lieutenant declined to take action. After al-Madhoun protested, the lieutenant revoked his candidate agent credential and told him to leave the polling station.

When international observers sought to speak with the lieutenant, he had disappeared. The deputy lieutenant present claimed ignorance of the incident.

Although varying value can be ascribed to individual incidents of intimidation in the polling stations visited, the NDI/Carter Center delegation maintains that the overall results did ultimately reflect voter preferences. In some cases voters and candidate agents felt free to talk to international observers and express their apprehensions openly, such as in Gaza North (45) and Qalqilya (08). In the Gaza North case, even the election security personnel approached international observers and suggested that the extent of the crowding and chaos were such that a re-vote was warranted. In several instances, however, observers noted that voters and candidate agents inside the polling stations and near security personnel appeared reluctant to express themselves freely. In more than a few cases, the same individuals would discreetly follow observers and, when away from the security or election officials, disclose allegations of more serious problems with the process. In several of these cases tensions remained high in and around polling stations as in Gaza North (21, 24) and Rafah (28, 30, 31). Outside a Gaza North polling station (24), an independent candidate agent was in the middle of explaining that only Fatah agents had been allowed in the polling station and he feared manipulation when several Fatah activists called him away. He returned moments later to tell the international observers of problems that there were no problems.

In general, uniformed civil police appeared to adhere more closely to their assigned role and assumed the role with a greater level of professionalism than did the agents serving as election security. Only occasionally did armed civil police enter a polling station without reason or appear to conduct themselves inappropriately. Election security personnel, by contrast, were often observed lingering inside polling stations as voters carried their ballots from the polling station official to their polling booths.

When official polling station organization weakened, election security personnel increasingly involved themselves in crowd control. The blurring of the role of security personnel on election day and apparent distrust of the security forces among the public contributed to a strained environment and occasionally led to disturbances around the polling stations. There were near riot conditions around particularly crowded polling stations in Gaza North (45, 73), Khan Younis (40, 106), Rafah (28, 30, 31, 43) and Gaza City (18). The CEC closed Gaza North polling station 39 in the middle of the day partly because of discord between the security forces and the voters. The CEC eventually called a re-vote for that polling station on January 31.

Security Personnel Voting

The issue of how and whether security personnel would vote remained undecided up to election day. In the end, however, there were no major complaints about the matter though some security force members were disappointed at not being able to participate in the first elections.

In the weeks before the elections, the CEC considered a number of possible mechanisms for allowing election security personnel to vote. Any scheme to enable security forces to vote had to consider measures to prevent possible multiple voting. The options included
providing mobile polling stations to carry ballots for all 16 constituencies or opening one special polling station in each constituency where security forces could vote when off duty. Both options required that the civil police, Mukhabarat and Preventive Security Forces submit to the CEC a list of names of all the officers who would be away from their assigned polling station areas on election day. The list would have allowed the CEC to delete those names from their assigned polling station registers and produce a special supplementary security forces list. The CEC never received a list from any of the security forces, and as a result, on January 17 dropped this particular plan to provide special voting opportunities for security forces.

Three days later on election day, the CEC announced special provisions that enabled the security forces to vote at the polling station where they were deployed if they were registered in that constituency and their names were added to the voter registry at that polling station. This provision only enabled a small number of security forces members to vote. However, by allowing them to vote at the polling station where they were posted for election day, this last-minute voting plan reduced the possibility of multiple voting by the security forces.

The Voter Registry

In general, the election law provided mechanisms to verify the identity of voters on election day. However, errors in the voter registry necessitated a last-minute modification of voting day procedures to help maximize voter enfranchisement. This change, unfortunately, inadvertently heightened the opportunity for multiple voting. As discussed in Chapter 2, the voter registration process was condensed from six weeks to three weeks, which was later extended several times. The lack of accurate census data and protracted negotiations with the Israelis about the details of the registration process further complicated this effort.

While remarkably accurate registration lists were compiled, some problems arose on election day. In several instances, individuals arrived at a polling station with the appropriate registration identification for that polling station and discovered that their names did not appear on the list. Errors in the list went undetected in some locations because voters could not check the final lists as they were not posted on January 1 as required by law or because voters did not verify their names on the lists when they were posted.

During the first half of election day, there was no standardized means of addressing discrepancies in the registration lists. Instead, each polling station commission responded differently. In some cases, the polling station commissions took advantage of the CEC’s election-day hotline, which was established to help voters whose names did not appear on voter registries. However, since most polling stations, particularly in the Gaza Strip, and in smaller villages and camps, did not have telephones this method of redress could not be consulted.

Elsewhere, such as Tulkarem (50, 57) and Nablus (47), voters were told to go to the DEO to acquire a signed permission slip to allow them to vote. In Nablus (146) and Gaza North (63), voters were permitted to cast ballots if their identity could be verified by a number of polling station workers, candidate agents or voters.

By early afternoon on election day, the CEC issued special instructions to all polling stations about registration lists. Some observers questioned the CEC’s capacity to disseminate these special instructions, particularly to remote villages or camps that were difficult to reach or had no telephone connections. Nevertheless, the CEC was remarkably successful and only a few polling station commissions reported never receiving the instructions such as in Hebron (172, 174, 192). The CEC instructed polling station commission members to allow voters to cast ballots when they could present voter registration cards bearing the number of the polling station even if their names did not appear on the voter registry list. In such a circumstance, polling station commission members would add their names and identification numbers to the registration list and hand the voter a ballot.

This announcement largely solved the problem of accommodating voters who had registered but whose names did not appear on the final lists. It also introduced new complications. During the registration process the registration card was treated as a simple device to remind the voter where to appear on election day. There was no requirement that the voter actually bring the card to the polling station. Because the registration cards were not carefully controlled during the registration process, the possibility existed that extra cards could have been filled out illegally and used for multiple voting.
Suspicion of multiple voting helped prompt a call for a re-vote in polling stations 39 and 76 in Gaza North. In polling station 39 a conspicuously large number of voters whose names were not listed on the voter registry arrived with registration cards to vote after the special provision was announced. Although this incident was the only one to which the CEC reacted, the candidate of the Popular Struggle Front in Khan Younis noted that large numbers of voters were added to two polling station registry lists in Khan Younis as well: at Khan Younis (54), 779 people were registered to vote but 1,053 voted, and at Khan Younis (63), the Popular Struggle Front agent reported that 560 people were registered to vote but 890 people voted. In both cases the difference between the number of people registered and the number of people voting resulted from names belatedly added to the voter registration lists. The Popular Struggle Front candidate alleged that Fatah volunteers were observed distributing blank registration cards on election eve that could have been used for multiple voting.

CEC member Gadi Barakensi said that the CEC would review all the voter registries to verify whether or not the names of added individuals were registered at other polling stations and whether or not multiple voting occurred. After completing a random spot check of Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Ramallah voter registries, the CEC discovered two instances of multiple voting that could not have influenced the outcome of the elections. In Bethlehem it found three names listed as having voted on two lists and in Ramallah it uncovered seven names listed as having voted on two lists.

Closing of the Polls and the Count

Polling stations were scheduled to close at 7:00 pm or after the last person in line at 7:00 pm voted. In the majority of cases, PSC officials proceeded to count the ballots at the polling station level, announce and post the results, and deliver the protocols and materials to the district level. Due in part to the unexpected high turnout and to late openings, several polling stations, in particular in the Gaza Strip, remained open well after 7:00 pm, and in one instance closed at 11:55 pm in Khan Younis. Likewise, voting for residents of municipal Jerusalem was extended an additional hour at the last minute to compensate for obstacles to voting earlier in the day. Only 10 voters cast ballots during this period.

Partly due to cramped conditions in the polling stations and the district election offices as well as to an inadequate understanding of the procedures by election officials, disputes arose about whether candidate agents and nonpartisan monitors were allowed to witness the counting and district-level tabulation processes. Even when allowed to observe the tally, candidate agents were not typically permitted to scrutinize the actual ballots but often sat across the room facing the polling station commissioners who conducted the count among themselves. There were a few exceptions, particularly in Khan Younis, that this procedure provided the opportunity for polling station commission workers to falsify announce the votes cast on the ballots.

Although there did not appear to be any systematic effort to deny observers access to the polling stations during the count, domestic observers were barred from observing the vote tally in some places. According to party agents in Khan Younis and Gaza North, district election officials allowed them no or limited access to the district-level tabulation process. The district election officer in Gaza North explained that candidate agents were removed from the district election office in order to provide staff the time to regain order. He insisted that all counting was suspended during this brief interlude and was resumed only when the candidate agents returned. The NDI/Carter Center delegation believes that this incident appears to be more a reflection of a lack of understanding of the law or a genuine attempt to address space restrictions rather than a deliberate effort to manipulate the results. Nevertheless, the lack of transparency in the overall process fueled suspicion that questionable motivations lurked behind this exclusion.

Despite detailed preparations and training for reporting results, it took much longer than anticipated to collect and consolidate the results at the district level. In some cases exhausted polling station workers either went home before delivering their protocols and/or demonstrated confusion about what or to whom they should deliver. By law they should have provided one copy each of the protocol to the District Election Office (DEO), the District Election Commission (DEC) and the Election Appeals Court (EAC). A fourth copy was to be posted at the polling site. The protocol delivered to the DEC was supposed to be accompanied by the ballots, voter registry and other
documents while the actual ballot boxes were to have been left behind in the polling station.

In practice, largely because the DECs, CEC and IAC were appointed at a late stage in the election process and had insufficient time to establish their operations and offices, the polling station commissions delivered three copies of the protocols and the other materials to the DEOs. The DEOs failed to establish a procedure for accepting and documenting the receipt of these materials from the polling stations, which added to the confusion. In a few instances, such as in Jerusalem, missing counts from several polling stations were not detected until a couple of days after the election. More significantly, the Central Election Commission was extremely slow to publicly announce final and complete election results. Independent candidates and opposition parties could not over a counting process they viewed as disorderly and inexact.

Balloting in the Jerusalem District

Since the highly contested status of Jerusalem was scheduled to be discussed after the elections, voting in East Jerusalem took place under special arrangements negotiated during treaty months and only concluded hours before election day. For largely symbolic reasons, some Palestinians were to vote at designated post offices inside municipal Jerusalem. Those parts of the constituency outside municipal Jerusalem followed the same rules and procedures as the rest of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. While Israeli and the FLO agreed to general principles and mechanisms for voting in East Jerusalem, they intentionally left many of the details of these arrangements vague in order to enable them to present politically palatable solutions to their respective constituencies. The ambiguities that remained in these arrangements did lead to several problems in the implementation of the election process for Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem. These arrangements ensured that the outcome of the permanent status negotiations would not be prejudiced or prompted by agreements reached during the interim agreement period.

The CEC established the Jerusalem constituency for the Palestinian residents of municipal Jerusalem and for the area to the east of the city to the Dead Sea and north of the city toward El-Bireh. The three categories of voters within this constituency constituted: (1) those living within the municipality who were to vote in specially arranged voting locations at post offices; (2) those living in the municipality who were assigned to polling stations outside the municipality; and (3) those who lived outside and who were to vote outside municipal Jerusalem.

Voter registration remained low, despite last-minute efforts by both prominent Palestinians and Israelis to allay Jerusalemite fears associated with the elections. Moreover, on election day, the turnout rate seemed to reflect different arrangements for those voting outside municipal Jerusalem. According to the CEC's reports and the European Union's February 20, 1996, final report, The Palestinian Elections in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and The Gaza Strip, January 28, 1996, turnout was 27.3 percent for the 4,965 voters assigned to vote in the post offices inside municipal Jerusalem. 34.8 percent for the approximately 35,000 registered residents outside municipal Jerusalem who voted outside municipal Jerusalem, and 62.2 percent for the roughly 40,000 voters who resided and voted outside municipal Jerusalem. Compared to the 72.5 percent voter turnout throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip, voter turnout was lower in the district of Jerusalem.

Approximately 5,000 voters outside municipal Jerusalem were assigned to vote in one of five designated post offices. Israeli-Arab postal workers administered these polling sites and were not cross-trained so that those ballots that were subsequently transported to the DEO in Abu Dis for counting. Israeli votes were charged with election-day and post office security.

Due to fears of possible election day violence from Israeli right-wing groups and Hamas, Israeli officials decided to maintain a large-scale security presence around the five post offices. However, observers viewed the high-profile presence as excessive and noted that some security force activities appeared to have no apparent relation to controlling disruption threats.

Early morning voting inside municipal Jerusalem commenced amid great tension and confusion. Several hundred Israeli policemen and soldiers arrived at each of the five Jerusalem post offices before they opened. The security forces surrounded the polling stations, checked the identity of all voters and in some cases videotaped voters as they approached the post offices.

Shortly after voting began, police arrested CEC-accredited Palestinian domestic monitors at the Salah Eddin post office. The
special arrangement for voting in Jerusalem remained vague on the question of whether Palestinian nonpartisan election monitors would be allowed to monitor balloting in the post offices. The police raised concerns about the armband being worn by the monitors, contending that the armband insignia resembled a party symbol (which was prohibited inside the post offices) or created the impression that the monitors were security personnel. At the Mount of Olives post office, police arrested the CEC-accredited translator working for an international observer delegation who did not have an Israeli permit to be in Jerusalem. At the time of the arrests, very few voters had arrived at the post office and there were no voters in line.

Voters in Jerusalem told the NDI/Carter Center teams deployed throughout the electoral district that the videotaping of voters by the Israeli police and the overwhelming Israeli security presence at the Jerusalem post offices were intimidating and likely contributed to the low voter turnout in Jerusalem. Additionally, the NDI/Carter Center teams observed a lack of cooperation on the part of Israeli officials in facilitating the passage of Palestinians through Jerusalem checkpoints. Many Palestinians were told that they would not be able to vote by the time that the polls closed at 7:00 pm.

Several times in the morning, the NDI/Carter Center delegation contacted senior Israeli military authorities to raise their concerns about these issues and about the arrest of the domestic monitors. By early afternoon, the military officials responded to the delegation with specific measures: the Israeli security presence around the post offices would be decreased and pulled back; the videotaping of voters would stop; domestic monitors would be allowed unhindered in the post offices; freedom of movement of Palestinians with Jerusalem I.D.s would be respected; and those in line after 7:00 pm would be allowed to vote.

After the NDI/Carter Center delegation’s intervention with Israeli authorities, and criticism from other observer groups and the media, security presence at the post offices decreased somewhat, although troop presence remained large. The videotaping of voters stopped, but was later observed to be partially at two post offices. At the Beit Hanina post office, a NDI/Carter Center team witnessed videotaping soon before the closing of the polls and intervened directly with the police officer who was filming. The officer turned off his camera.

Throughout the day, the Jerusalem post offices were crowded with journalists, television crews, security forces and international observers. The atmosphere was tense and, in a few instances, confrontations arose between the police and onlookers. Voters were conspicuously absent.

Due to the low turnout and the heavy Israeli security presence throughout the day, the CEC decided to extend voting by an additional hour. However, many potential voters registered to vote at post offices did not learn of the extension and only a few cast ballots during the supplemental hour. Likewise, hours were extended at the last minute in some polling stations for municipal Jerusalem residents outside the city to allow late arrivals to vote.

After the close of voting at the post offices, post office clerks sealed the receptacles and loaded them onto post office vans. The vans were escorted by a long line of police vans, military vehicles, press and election observers on their drive through the city to the five post offices and then across the municipal boundaries. At a crossroads in Abu Dis a few kilometers east of municipal Jerusalem, the post office workers transferred the receptacles into waiting CEC vans, which drove to a nearby hall in Abu Dis. Domestic monitors escorted the receptacles as they were transported to the Abu Dis counting center.

The vast majority of registered Jerusalem residents (approximately 35,000) who voted in polling stations outside municipal Jerusalem faced their own set of obstacles. First, the final decision about where they would vote was not negotiated until January 17, which left election administrators only a few days to publicize the details. The delay stemmed from difficulties in identifying extra polling station sites outside municipal Jerusalem and negotiations regarding the number of Palestinians who would be allowed to vote inside Jerusalem.

Second, this last-minute decision aggravated transportation arrangements. On January 18, two days before elections, the West Bank election coordinator was assigned the task of organizing election-day transportation for these voters. Information regarding these arrangements was not sufficiently disseminated to IDF troops deployed at checkpoints surrounding Jerusalem. As a result of poor communication, the Gilo checkpoint was closed on election-day morning and the IDF turned back some residents leaving the city to vote. This incident in the morning seems to have discouraged voters.
from trying to leave Jerusalem for the remainder of the day. In the afternoon, NDI/Carter Center observers noted largely empty minivans traveling through neighborhoods in East Jerusalem ready to collect voters and take them to their polling stations outside municipal Jerusalem.

In the end, approximately 40 percent of registered voters in the Jerusalem district voted in the first Palestinian elections. The low turnout can be attributed to the unique arrangements created by the PLO and Israel for voting within Jerusalem. The large security presence of Israeli forces in municipal Jerusalem, the videotaping of voters entering the polls, and the confusion and difficulties surrounding transportation arrangements for Palestinians voting outside the municipal boundaries helped contribute to an overall low turnout within the Jerusalem district.

Although this chapter refers to several procedural irregularities on election day—overcrowding, security interference, and improper processing of illiterate voters—NDI/Carter Center found no evidence that they influenced the election results. In fact, these types of irregularities have been observed in transition elections worldwide. Thus, on January 20, Palestinians accomplished a substantial achievement—they organized their first-ever national elections and did so with relatively few administrative problems and with no incidents of violence. However, this administrative success was not transferred as positively into the post-election counting and appeals period. While there is little evidence of wrongdoing in the post-election period, the CEC’s lack of transparency and public outreach built upon pre-election fears of vote rigging in favor of Fatah candidates and left many Palestinians questioning the overall integrity of the elections.

Chapter 5

Election Results and Aftermath

The counting and appeals phases constituted the greatest impediments to the successful implementation of the Palestinian election process. Disorganization in the tabulation of results, changes in the list of winners and reports of missing polling station tallies created an atmosphere of suspicion in the days after the elections. By January 23, several candidates had moved to file appeals, and rumors spread that the election results had been changed to accommodate certain candidates with a place on the Council. The CEC and EAC’s reluctance to actively address these lingering suspicions inadvertently served to further fuel skepticism about the results. However, despite serious irregularities in the counting and appeals processes, and the CEC and EAC’s passivity, NDI/Carter Center found no persuasive evidence to suggest that the final results were anything other than a reflection of the electorate’s will.
NDI and The Carter Center monitored the post-election process from election night through early March to assess the resolution of election complaints by the CEC and release final election results. In addition, NDI/Carter Center monitored post-election developments in two constituencies, Ramallah and Gaza North, in which same polling station re-votes or recounts were necessary to complete the results. Finally, NDI/Carter Center monitored appeals submitted to the EAC.

The short timeline for organizing the election administration in the months before the election caught up with the CEC in the post-election period. As a result, the CEC did not prepare an adequate system to centralize, tabulate, and release results in an efficient and transparent manner. Despite these problems and the doubts raised by them, there is no evidence to prove that the vote count was changed or that the official list of winners is not the list of candidates who received the most votes. However, public skepticism was exacerbated by the fact that the CEC did not address public concerns by sufficiently explaining the problems that had occurred. Moreover, the EAC refused to hear two important appeals, which represented a missed opportunity to resolve challenges to the process. For these reasons, there was greater suspicion about the results than warranted by the facts.

Centralization and Tabulation of Results

The election law and the manual prepared for polling station officials were designed to provide a system for a rapid tabulation of results and independent verification. An initial, provisional result was to be calculated immediately after the voting at the DEOs based on a rapid summation of results from polling stations. Subsequently, the DEC and the CEC were to conduct a more comprehensive review that would yield the official results. In addition, the law provided a number of steps to ensure transparency in the process. In practice, however, the system did not work as planned.

The election law stipulated that votes would be counted (except in the case of municipal Jerusalem) in the polling stations immediately after the voting, which could be observed by candidate agents and domestic and international observers. Additionally, the law permitted these observers to make their own copies of the results, which the polling station commission members would be required to sign. Four copies of an official protocol of the count were to be made to provide for independent verification. One copy was to be posted for the public at the polling station, the second was to be sent to the DEC, and the third copy was to be sent to the EAC for tabulation of provisional results and a fourth copy was to be sent (along with the used and unused ballots, the registration form and other documents) to the DEC to allow for independent review in preparation for tallying the final results. A fourth copy of the protocol was to be sent to the EAC.

Several of the problems in tabulating the results were exacerbated by the incomplete development of the DEOs, which were not established until the end of December and never emerged as independent entities. As a result, the transfer of results and release results at the district level failed to provide the expected independent verification. Three copies were sent altogether to the DEO, which was the de facto address for the DEC and the EAC. In most cases, a fourth copy was posted at polling stations, but most were removed or torn down within a day. In addition, few of the candidates in the polling stations asked for an official signature to certify their own counts.

The DEOs were not organizationally prepared to receive the protocols from the polling stations and tabulate the results. Many of the DEOs were physically too small to accommodate all of the material returning from the polling stations as well as the staff members, candidate agents, and domestic and international observers. In addition, polling station commission officials had either not received or not understood instructions that required them to leave empty ballot boxes in the polling stations. Many brought the ballot boxes to the district level along with the protocols, used and unused ballots, and registries, all of which contributed to the delay in the districts. Also, the DEOs had not prepared a system to track the arriving protocols. In larger constituencies, where more than 100 protocols were arriving throughout the election night, officials could not determine which protocols were outstanding or where all the protocols were situated in the office. The fact that the results were tabulated by hand only worsened conditions. DEO officials transcribed the results from each polling station onto a chart and added the numbers with a calculator. In many cases confusion with handwritten figures, some in Arabic and some in English, led to initial errors.

In a few cases, results arrived late to the district level from some polling stations. Two polling stations in Jerusalem, one in Jermu and...
their results. The CEC provided no explanation for releasing the incomplete tallies. In some cases the partial results were based on a small percentage of polling stations representing only one part of a region. The results released for Jerusalem on January 21, for example, included only the 11 polling stations within the municipality, representing less than 5 percent of the vote.

These partial results were widely reported in the media. On January 22, the CEC released the official provisional results, which differed significantly from the partial results published in the media the day before. There were 13 inconsistencies, for example, between the official provisional results and the list of winners in the Associated Press wire service story printed in The Jerusalem Post on the morning of January 22. For the Jerusalem district, The Jerusalem Post list of winners included FIDA candidate Zahava Kornal and PPP candidate Rana al-Nashashibi. In the subsequently released provisional results these candidates did not appear on the winner’s list and in their place were two Independent candidates affiliated with Fatah, Ziad Abu Ziad and Ahmad Al-Batsh. Similarly in Hebron, Independent candidate Abdul Ashab appeared on the list of preliminary winners but did not appear in the provisional list. In this instance, Fatah candidate Ali Izrihaim Ghalo Al-Qawasmi appeared on the winner’s list. In Gaza City, Arafat spokesperson Marwan Kanaan refused to be substituted for Islamic Independent Nasser Mazzini in the provisional results. Following these changes, rumors abounded that Arafat had ordered that the results be modified to secure the election of certain favorites.

Gaza Strip: He-vote in Gaza North

The CEC considered procedural problems significant enough to call for a re-vote in only two of 1,496 polling stations—both of which were located in Jabaliya in the Gaza North district. After reviewing the results, the CEC also discovered some errors in the original provisional results for three polling stations. A re-vote and a review of the polling station-by-polling station results led the CEC to replace the last two of the seven elected Council members.

CEC officials closed polling station 76 in the late afternoon on election day based on allegations that people were voting who were not registered at that polling station. According to CEC officials, the station was closed when authorities discovered that many voters living near the polling station but not registered to vote there had voted
under the special provisions introduced by CEC on election day. (See Chapter 4.) These voters had allegedly obtained and completed blank registration cards, and voted illegally. Polling station 39 also closed before the election process could be completed, in this case during the counting. The CEC closed the station when near riot conditions developed outside the station where the voting had taken place.

Crowds gathered around the station when voters complained that security officials had manipulated votes and directed illiterate voters. Polling station commission officials exacerbated the problem when they refused to allow some candidate agents into the crowded polling station to observe the count. The CEC scheduled a re-vote for the two stations on January 31.

For the re-vote, the CEC instituted several procedural changes that improved conditions for voting. First, only voters whose names appeared on the voter registry on January 20 were allowed to vote. Also, to alleviate overcrowding for the re-vote, the CEC doubled the number of polling stations from two to four, thereby reducing the number of voters from 500 to 1,000. Polling station commission officials from other districts in the Gaza Strip were recruited to conduct the polling in order to avoid the concerns about partiality. The CEC also provided a heavy security presence around the stations to prevent disturbances. A further improvement specified that each illiterate voter would be accompanied by two people, usually an observer and one of the polling station commission officials.

The re-vote in each polling station was monitored by between 10 and 30 candidate agents and by domestic and international observers. At the conclusion of the re-vote these monitors registered no complaints about the process.

Two days after the re-vote, the CEC released results for the constituencies. In the new results the last two on the list of seven winning candidates, Mohammed Abdul Jawad Akahek and Khder Hussein Hashem Abu Nada, were replaced by Imad Al-Falouji and Kamal Al-Sharafi. In polling stations 39 and 76, where the re-vote had taken place, Khader Hussein Hashem Abu Nada obtained more votes than both Falouji and Sharafi. Adding the provisional results to the totals obtained in the re-vote should have produced the following order:

- Akakeshe in 6th place with 8,455 votes (7,891 in the provisional results plus 564 in the re-vote.)
- Nada in 7th place with 8,294 votes (7,572 in the provisional results plus 722 in the re-vote.)
- Sharafi in 8th place with 8,282 votes (7,539 in the provisional results plus 743 in the re-vote.)
- Falouji in 9th place with 8,102 votes (7,524 in the provisional results plus 578 in the re-vote.)

Instead, the order of results for the constituency after the re-vote were: Sharafi in 6th place with 8,757 votes; Falouji in 7th place with 8,529 votes; Akakeshe in 8th place with 8,023 votes; and Nada in 9th place with 7,848 votes.

Questioned about the apparent discrepancies, the CEC indicated that the provisional results had been based on a tabulation that contained substantial errors. NDI/Carter Center observers were shown differences between the original protocols and the figures entered on the tabulation charts for those polling stations. For polling stations 10 and 35, the tabulation charts added an additional digit to the vote total for Nada, in what appeared to be a different handwriting, which increased his total by 300 votes. For two other stations, 43 and 48, the tabulation charts indicated that 249 votes had been added to Akakeshe's total. According to CEC officials, other errors stemmed from confusion between Arabic and English figures and because some numbers were entered in the wrong column on the tabulation chart. NDI/Carter Center observers reviewed the final results for the constituency by comparing figures on the final corrected tabulation chart with original protocols and by comparing CEC polling station results with records of international observers. This review revealed no evidence to contradict the final results.

CEC announcements about the situation in Jabalia provided voters with little rationale about why the re-vote had been called in the two polling stations or why the results had changed. As there were reports of disturbances around other polling stations in the provisional results. On election day, some observers questioned why there would be a re-vote in polling stations 39 and 76 and not in others. Informed observers questioned whether the re-vote had been a part of an effort to obtain a seat for Imad Al-Falouji, a candidate affiliated with Hamas but competing on the Fateh list and an important link in Hamas-Palestinian Authority negotiations. Immediately following the re-vote, CEC officials refused to allow candidates to check the original protocols. Akakeshe and Nada won separate appeals submitted to the
Election Appeals Court demanding access to the protocols. Both candidates reviewed the protocols and compared them with records from their agents. While neither candidate found evidence that their defeat was caused by any tampering with the results, neither conveyed these findings publicly to his supporters.

West Bank: Recount in Ramallah

Procedural irregularities in the West Bank led the CEC to order a recount in Ramallah where 18 protocols were found to be missing after all figures had been recorded on the regional tabulation sheet and the provisional results had been calculated. Because the results for these polling stations had already been recorded, the fact that the protocols were missing created a problem for verifying the provisional results with original documentation, but not for actually calculating the results. The CEC announced that the protocols were missing and that a recount would take place on February 4. Polling station commission officials from those polling stations were recruited to count the ballots, and candidates were invited to attend or send their agents. During a meeting before the recount, however, many of the polling station commissioners announced that they would refuse to recount ballots unless there was a full re-vote. They maintained that they could not be certain that the ballots had been altered or that the ballot boxes tampered within the two weeks since the vote. A group of candidates also present at the meeting demanded a re-vote in the entire constituency. The candidates and most of the polling station commission officials left the meeting in protest. Commissioners for two polling stations remained, however, and recounted the ballots for polling stations 157 and 114. They found no significant discrepancies between the result of the new count and the totals marked on the tabulation sheet. Ballots for the other 16 polling stations were counted at the CEC office. The CEC reported that it found and corrected minor differences, but there has been no independent verification of this claim.

Comparison of Results to Check for Errors

NDI/Carter Center observers and other monitors sought to verify official results by comparing them to independent records. International and domestic observers were present at and monitored two important recounts in which questions raised in the tabulation process were addressed. On January 24, NDI/Carter Center observers monitored a review of the Jerusalem tabulation sheet, which revealed that polling station 66 had been counted twice and that polling station 65 had not been reported. The observers accompanied a representative of the DBC and candidate Zahira Kamal to the Bethel School for the Blind, the location of polling station 65, and found the protocol and the ballots for the polling station, which had been left unattended for three days in a classroom. The results on the protocol matched results recorded during the count by Kamal's agent, which indicated that the protocol had not been altered. The corrected totals, including polling station 65 did not change the results.

A Palestinian observer working with the NDI/Carter Center team observed a similar process in Jenin, where the results for polling station 136 were entered twice and not included for polling station 104. These discrepancies were discovered at 7:00 am on Monday, January 27. The protocols and ballot papers for 104 were found in the DEO and, as in the case in Jerusalem, they paralleled records of candidate agents. In this case, the late entry did change the results. The sixth candidate, Mohammed Abu Robb (Fatah), dropped to seventh place and Fadhlur Turkman (Independent) took the sixth, and final, seat for Jenin by 15 votes.

NDI and The Carter Center issued a public statement on January 29 recommending that the CEC publish the results polling station-by-polling station and provide copies of the protocols to anyone who questioned the results of specific polling stations. NDI/Carter Center representatives met several times with CEC officials to discuss the importance of the transparency of the results as well as the significance of publicizing and clarifying details of the tabulation process to alleviate public concerns. The Norwegian observer delegation also wrote to the CEC on this issue.

The CEC responded with an intensive in-house examination of the results. It did not publicly announce this internal review, disseminate its findings or provide public access to the results for each polling station. During the study, CEC officials entered the polling station results on computer spreadsheets in place of the handwritten charts used at the district level on election day. Through this process, officials were able to correct errors that had occurred during the transfer of results from the protocols to the charts on election night, and calculate official final results. In a press conference on February
10, nearly three weeks after the elections, CEC chairman Mahmoud Abbas announced the winners.

The CEC provided little public information during the final tabulation and review processes, however. In a press release on January 31, the CEC announced that the final results would be completed and available "in a few days." There were no other announcements to explain the process by which the CEC was reviewing the results or to indicate to candidates how they could pursue their concerns. The CEC also issued brief statements announcing the re-vote in Jabaliya and the recount in Ramallah. Not realizing that the CEC had centralized all candidates, many candidates visited the DEOs to check the results and were turned away. CEC officials told NDI/Carter Center delegates that candidates and observers were free to visit the central office to examine the records or to observe the scrutiny process. However, the CEC failed to publicize this offer, which meant that few candidates were aware of the invitation. Final results by polling station were not released for all constituencies until February 13 in the West Bank and February 27 in Gaza Strip.

When these results became available, NDI/Carter Center observers and domestic observers from the PDMC compared the official results from 462 polling stations (out of 1,696) with the figures recorded by observers who watched the count on election night. In almost all cases, the records of independent observers matched official figures. Where there were discrepancies, NDI/Carter Center observers compared observer records with the original protocols and in a few cases found that the official figures had been incorrectly recorded from the original protocols. None of these errors affected the outcome of the elections in any constituency. These comparisons support the official results as announced by the CEC. However, a more forthcoming and public explanation by the CEC could have quelled suspicions about the process among skeptical voters.

Complaints to the Election Appeals Court

The election law established an Election Appeals Court of five judges to hear claims and appeals related to decisions taken by the CEC. The election law limits the time during which appeals can be submitted and during which they must be adjudicated. However, travel restrictions and other unexpected problems delayed the EAC’s adjudication of appeals. EAC President Zuhair Al Sourani could not preside over two cases because he could not travel between the West Bank and Gaza. Due to both logistical and political complications, decisions on the last series of appeals were not rendered until March 3, 1996.

In total, the EAC recorded 24 appeals against decisions taken by the CEC. NDI and The Carter Center were able to obtain records from the Court for 15 of these cases. In two of these cases, the EAC ruled in favor of the plaintiff. In the case of a dispute about whether a particular neighborhood would be included in the Tubas or Nablus electoral constituency, the EAC overturned the CEC decision that ruled that the area should be registered in Nablus. The EAC also supported an appeal by candidates from Jabaliya to obtain access to the election protocols. In several cases, the EAC declined to hear an appeal because the plaintiff had not fully followed official procedures for filing appeals; court records do not specify those aspects of the filing procedure that were not followed. The EAC ruled against the plaintiff in most of the cases it heard—most often due to a lack of evidence.

Following disputed elections, an appeals process can provide an opportunity to resolve election-related disputes and increase confidence in the process. In the Palestinian case, however, the appeals process was not able to achieve these objectives. Most of the appeals questioned the results. Nada appealed the CEC’s decision to conduct a re-vote in polling stations 39 and 76, asserting that the election procedures in those polling stations had been satisfactory. The appeal was rejected on the basis that the election law accords the CEC the authority to call for a re-election when it determines that such an option is warranted. The CEC “had doubts about the integrity of the election in polling stations 39 and 76.” Several candidates from Khan Yonis submitted appeals at different stages of the appeals process. Dallal El Tawfik Faris contested the validity of the preliminary results in Khan Yonis, which the EAC rejected on the basis that neither the candidate nor her agents had filed complaints during the counting of the ballots. After the CEC denied their appeal for a recount in their constituency, a group of four candidates from Khan Yonis appealed the decision to the EAC. The plaintiffs argued that because “the CEC did not strictly follow the law and procedures...a re-election should be called.” According to the Court record, the
appeal did not attempt to demonstrate that lack of adherence to the election law materially affected the results. The Appeals Court rejected the appeal on the basis that “the matter brought before the court is based on allegations.”

The appeals process failed to achieve its potential mediating function for two reasons. First, few of the candidates had sufficiently trained their polling station agents to collect the appropriate evidence to support their appeals. According to the election law, candidate agents had the right to register complaints on the protocol and to obtain the signatures of the polling station commission president on their copy of the results. Few agents took advantage of these prerogatives, however. As a result, many candidates with concerns about the results lacked adequate records to check the numbers or prove that complaints had been registered during the tabulation process.

Second, the EAC decided not to hear two important cases from Ramallah and Hebron that had generated considerable media attention. Possibly the most significant complaint was raised by Mustapha Barghouti, who placed seventh in the voting in Ramallah. 1,163 votes behind the lowest-placed winning candidate. On January 22, Barghouti submitted a formal complaint to the Central Election Commission calling for a new election in the entire Ramallah constituency. The CEC met with Barghouti on January 25, but did not grant his petition. Barghouti then submitted an appeal to the EAC; 14 other candidates from Ramallah joined the appeal as secondary plaintiffs. After several postponements caused by the inability of some court judges to travel from Gaza to the West Bank, the court met on February 26.

Barghouti based his claim on a number of alleged procedural irregularities. He complained in particular about the delay in delivering some ballot boxes and ballots to the central level and about the CEC decision to allow individuals to vote who were not on the registration list. In addition, the complaint criticized the mishandling of protocols that led to recounting ballots in 18 polling stations and noted that in one instance a protocol was left at a polling station for more than 24 hours. However, in a meeting with NDI/Carter Center observers, Barghouti acknowledged that he could not identify specific acts that could explain the difference of 1,163 votes between himself and the next highest candidate. He indicated that his comparison of provisional polling station results with results of independent observers for 62 polling stations uncovered three discrepancies that would have provided him 219 additional votes. Barghouti contended that his appeal was made not to prove that he should have won the seat, but rather that enough procedural errors were committed to invalidate the results. The EAC dismissed the complaint on technical grounds.

The court ruled that because the winners in the elections were not the subject of this appeal, the court therefore cannot make a ruling. This appeal needs to be addressed towards the winning candidates. Because the winning candidates are not the subject of this appeal, the grounds for this appeal are invalid. Also, the winners in the elections would need to stand in court.

According to Jordanian High Court Resolution 46/93 published in the Union Magazine, 1994 (page 1455) suspicions of election results need to be addressed towards the winning candidates and bodies in charge of the election.11

In Hebron, six candidates submitted a joint appeal, including Mohammed Ayesh Abduljawad Milhem who placed 12th (10 candidates were elected). 263 votes short of winning a seat. As in Ramallah, the appeal alleged procedural irregularities that would warrant a re-vote in the constituency. The candidates asserted that results were tabulated before all protocols were received and that individuals who were not election officials, in particular Hebron municipal employees, helped conduct the vote counting. Further, the appeal alleged that independent candidates and agents were prevented from observing the tabulation and that the report of missing protocols indicated negligence on the part of election officials. The EAC issued the same ruling as in the Ramallah appeal. That is, it dismissed the appeal on procedural grounds and forfeited an opportunity to publicly clarify any allegations or unspecified complaints. In the immediate aftermath of the elections, critics often cited Ramallah and Hebron as areas where there was greatest reason to doubt the results. Neither appeal, however, provided substantial evidence that the irregularities would have changed the outcome. Both

11 This is an unofficial translation of a summary of the court proceedings provided to NDI by the court clerk.
appeals attempted to prove that fraud could have occurred rather than fraud had, in fact, taken place. By refusing to hear these cases the EAC missed an opportunity to resolve a debate that was important to the credibility of the post-election process—whether or not the problems that occurred during the elections could have been determined to be intentional efforts to reorder the results.

The Final Results

On February 10, the CEC announced the winners of the elections. (See Appendix L.) Yasser Arafat defeated Samihah Khalil in the race for Kaee’s of the PA, garnering 88.26 percent of the vote; Khalil received 11.74 percent. Of the 88 elected members of the Council, 51 had campaigned on a Fateh list. Only one other candidate affiliated with a party won a seat, Haidar Abdul Shafi, leader of the NDC. The 36 other winning candidates all registered as independents, approximately of whom 14 were affiliated with Fateh. As discussed in Chapter 3, a large number of Fateh members decided to run as independents when they failed to gain a place on official Fateh lists. Some of these candidates ran as loyal Fateh members who wanted to participate in this first national event even if not selected by the leadership. Others actively campaigned against the official Fateh lists in their constituency.

Fateh’s substantial majority in the new Palestinian Legislative Council is not surprising given its popularity and the non-participation of opposition parties. The large numerical advantage for Fateh is balanced somewhat by the presence of leading independent figures such as Haidar Abdul Shafi, who received the largest number of votes (58,119) of any Council candidate, and Hanan Ashrawi, who also garnered substantial support. Additionally, the Fateh members, some of whom ran against the party list, should not necessarily be viewed as a united block. Fateh members on the Palestinian Council reflect different trends within a broad political movement.

In total, 73.5 percent of the 955,180 registered voters participated in the elections, a substantially higher figure than many had expected given the non-participation of traditional opposition factions. The CEC registered a substantially higher turnout in Gaza Strip (88 percent) than in the West Bank (73 percent). The difference may be attributable to the greater distances that voters had to travel in the West Bank and to the low turnout in municipal Jerusalem and Hebron.

In addition to the unexpectedly high turnout overall, there was also surprisingly low number of spoiled and blank ballots. According to available CEC statistics, 3.5 percent of voters in the West Bank cast invalid ballots and 4.3 percent cast blank ballots. In the Gaza Strip, 2.3 percent cast invalid ballots and 1 percent cast blank ballots. If accurate, these figures suggest a higher level of voter understanding of the election process than had been anticipated before the elections. It is also worth noting that the election law specified that voters mark “X,” and that even if the voter’s choice was clearly indicated, marks other than “X” were considered invalid.

There are several significant gaps in the CEC election records. For example, the CEC could produce no figures for the number of blank and spoiled ballots in Ramallah, Hebron, Jerusalem and Bethlehem. In addition, the official number of registered voters released by the CEC after the elections was 58,055 fewer than the figure published before the elections.

Finally, the election law requires that in constituencies with quotas, the final results list those candidates separately in order of the number of votes received. The fact that the CEC never specified which candidates were registered as Christian or Samaritan precluded the means to obtain the information needed to meet this stipulation. In practice, religious affiliation is sufficiently well known that Palestinians recognized which candidates were eligible for the quota seats. However, there exists no official record of those candidates and their vote totals.

The irregularities in the counting process, the passive role of the CEC and the reticence of the EAC unnecessarily reinforced public doubt in the election process and skepticism toward the newly elected Palestinian Legislative Council. Given the greater degree of competition anticipated in future elections, NDJ/Carter Center recommend that the PA take concrete steps to address the problems raised by the 1996 elections before it conducts local and/or future legislative elections. Resolving these issues would help build public confidence in the electoral results that is essential to post-election stability.
Chapter 6
Observing the Palestinian Elections

Transition elections often occur in an environment of uncertainty, confusion and apprehension. Election administrators remain concerned about their ability to implement the process procedurally and voters grapple with the substantive decisions of whose they will vote. The January 20, 1996, Palestinian elections were further complicated by three unique factors: (1) ongoing negotiations between the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli government about the elections; (2) broader questions about the future status of the territories and realm of Palestinian autonomy; and (3) the development of political parties, a necessarily divisive process in the middle phase of a transition process. Voters harbored real reservations regarding the nature and power of the body they would elect, and the future status of the Palestinian entity the Council would govern.

In this atmosphere, domestic and international observers were seen as playing an important role in encouraging a meaningful electoral exercise that could ultimately contribute to the establishment of more stable and accountable governing structures. International observers have no legal authority within an election process. Rather, their presence is designed to demonstrate international support for free electoral conduct, to deter electoral fraud, and to assess the fairness of the exercise and report to the international community. If invited, observers can also help mediate disputes between political parties, election officials and/or the media. In such negotiations, observers can share their experiences with similar issues during transition elections in other countries.

The Interim Agreement signed by Israel and the PLO in September 1995 is a complex and comprehensive agreement that addresses a wide range of issues and areas of mutual concern. The inclusion of provisions to permit domestic and international monitoring of the Palestinian elections represented one of the most important achievements of the agreement. Annex II of the Interim Agreement, the protocol on elections, states that all stages of the Palestinian electoral process, from voter registration to vote tabulation, are open to observation.

The Interim Agreement described three categories of election observers: (1) invited governments or intergovernmental organizations; (2) international non-governmental organizations; and (3) domestic monitors. It also established procedures by which observer delegations could obtain credentials to monitor the elections.

European Union Coordination

The Interim Agreement designated the European Union (EU) as the coordinator of all international election observer delegations. At meetings in Brussels in June and October of 1995, the EU established formal mechanisms for promoting coordination among the various delegations. These included creating three advisory units: a coordinating center free of delegation leaders; a technical task force comprising each delegation’s or country’s chief technical advisors to address issues related to the technical administration of the elections; and a “joint operations unit” to coordinate the details associated with election-day deployment, communication, reporting and security.

In addition to stipulating the European Union’s coordination role, Annex II of the Interim Agreement listed other countries and organizations to be invited to send international observers. These
Bank and Gaza Strip from November 10 to 16, 1995 in order to assess preparations for the Palestinian elections, identify potential obstacles to meaningful elections and outline possible mechanisms to address such obstacles. This mission coincided with and focused on, among other issues, the opening of the voter registration canvass, which began on November 12. At that time, planning for elections had shifted from preparing for a March election date to adhering to a mid-January time-frame, and as a result there was widespread concern about whether the necessary preparations could be completed during the condensed period.

Concern focused on the voter registration canvass, the first and most intensive step in the election preparations, which had been reduced from six weeks to three. Based on meetings with election officials at all levels, monitoring the canvass and meeting with political leaders, the first delegation commended the beginning of registration. In a statement released on November 17, 1995, the delegation said that canvassers appear “committed to completing the canvass fairly and thoroughly and ... eligible voters generally want to register.” At the same time the delegation called for “urgent resolution” of outstanding elements of the process, including the completion of the election law and the nomination of the Central Election Commission. (See Appendix A.)

A second pre-election delegation visited the West Bank and Gaza Strip from December 10 to 16, at the commencement of the candidate registration period and during a series of presidential decrees changing the election law. This mission focused on the broader political environment for elections. Similar to the first delegation, the delegation met with Palestinian security force officials, partisan entity leaders, media representatives, human rights advocates and others. During this mission, the delegation also visited with PLO Chairman Arafat to address his presidential decrees and specifically the changing time lines.

The second delegation noted the expressed commitment of both the Palestinian leadership and opposition actors, including Hamas, to regard the elections “as the basis of political legitimacy and the key to long-term stability” and to endorse an election process free from “disruptions or violence.” While Hamas did not participate in the elections, it refrained from calling for an active boycott. At the same time, the delegation urged the Palestinian Authority “to demonstrate
greater respect for human rights, freedom of speech and the rule of law." The delegation also recommended implementation of specific guidelines to regulate access to the media and to promote easier access and mobility for Palestinians traveling between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip for election-related purposes. (See Appendix B.)

The NDI/Carter Center monitoring program issued a third statement on January 2, 1996 that again raised concerns about the "lack of a stable legal framework," detentions without due process of law and the absence of balance in media coverage. The statement warned that the changes in the election calendar and procedures "may increase voter confusion and diminish public confidence in the electoral process." The statement also noted that the Council seems "appear not to have been allocated in proportion to the number of inhabitants, as required by law." In addition, the NDI/Carter Center statement questioned the voting procedures for police officers who would not be registered at the polling station at which they would be assigned on election day. (See Appendix C.)

Many of the issues raised in these statements continued to affect the election process. Having tracked the most pressing issues since early October and having closely followed political developments in the territories for two years, NDI and The Carter Center were better able to evaluate the entire process.

NDI/Carter Center Election/Week Observation

Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and former Polish Prime Minister Hanna Suchocka co-led the NDI/Carter Center election observation delegation. The 41-member delegation representing 11 nations included political and civic leaders, elected officials, scholars and journalists, most of whom had participated in or monitored transitional elections. (See Appendix M.) The multinational delegation provided the overall observation effort with a wide-range of perspectives on the election process—of established democracies, newly democratic states and countries in transition.

In addition to extensive written briefing materials augmented by NDI's two-year presence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the NDI/Carter Center four-month monitoring program, the delegation attended a series of briefings in Jerusalem on January 17 and 18. (See Appendix N.) On January 19, NDI and The Carter Center deployed the delegates to electoral districts throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The teams met with candidates, elections officials, EU monitors who had been deployed to the districts two months before election day, and others to gain a better understanding of local concerns and issues. (See Appendix O.)

On election day, the NDI/Carter Center delegation observed the voting process from opening the ballot boxes to counting the votes in all 16 electoral districts at more than 200 polling sites. On the day after the elections, the delegation re-assembled in Jerusalem to discuss individual team observations and formulate a broader perspective of the Palestinian elections throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The discussion contributed to the NDI/Carter Center preliminary statement on the Palestinian elections presented at a January 21 press conference by delegation co-leaders Carter and Suchocka. (See Appendix D.)

Most international observation delegations left the West Bank and Gaza Strip days after the elections. The last representatives of the EU, the principal coordinating body, departed approximately two weeks following the elections. Palestinians expressed disappointment at the international community's perceived lack of interest in the resolution of election complaints. As described in Chapter 5, the immediate post-election period was characterized by confusion and tension. The significant delay in announcing the final results further fueled suspicion regarding the process.

A small NDI/Carter Center staff team remained in the West Bank and Gaza Strip following the tabulation process, the appeals period, and the protracted release of the final results. During February and March, the team listened to candidate complaints, encouraged CEC members to take action on complaints and met with Election Appeals Court members to assess their responses. The observation team urged the CEC and EAC to respond to complaints. It also helped reassure candidates skeptical about the confusing and disorganized process by sharing with them examples from other transitional elections and interpreting the law to clarify the rationale for the CEC's conduct. The NDI/Carter Center team continued to coordinate with domestic monitors that remained throughout the appeals process, such as Palestinian Domestic Monitoring Committee, PeaceWatch, and the Palestinian Center for Human Rights, and candidate agents and candidates. On January 29, the NDI/Carter Center observation
Palestinians maintained high expectations about the role that international observers would play in monitoring their elections. In some cases these expectations led to a distorted perception of the role of observers. During the pre-election period, several opposition candidates and parties, noted to NDI and The Carter Center that the international presence would preclude fraud on election day. Part of the confusion stemmed from the Arabic word for observer, which means supervision. Some Palestinians seem to have relied almost exclusively on international observers to act as election police, rather than assuming more of these responsibilities themselves. Consequently, they were disappointed when international observers did not prevent election-day irregularities. This disillusionment was exacerbated by those observers who focused almost exclusively on election-day events and quickly praised the process the day after the elections—before all the results had been tallied and before all the complaints were organized, submitted and adjudicated by the CEC or the EAC.

**Domestic Monitors**

Nonpartisan domestic monitoring efforts can encourage a more honest election by evaluating all aspects of the process and conveying its findings to election officials and the public. Publicity surrounding the formation of a monitoring program, as well as the pre-election and election-day activities of the monitors, enhance public confidence and encourage citizen involvement in the process. They are sometimes able to help resolve disputes during the campaign period and through their presence deter fraud, irregularities and innocent administrative mistakes on election day. International observer efforts are often complemented by the work of domestic election monitors. While international observers benefit from perspectives of elections around the world as well as from a familiarity with international standards, domestic monitors profit from their acquaintance with the local language, customs and politics. This knowledge provides them with a more profound understanding of how pre-election and election-day events affect the voters. Moreover, domestic monitoring groups can

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usually deploy many more observers than can international organizations, which yields a much larger sample upon which to assess the process.

More than 2,000 nonpartisan domestic monitors joined 600 international observers representing many countries, intergovernmental organizations and nongovernmental organizations to observe the Palestinian elections. The Palestinian Domestic Monitoring Committee (PDMC), a coalition of more than 40 Palestinian NGOs, organized the largest domestic monitoring effort. The PDMC recruited, trained and deployed 2,000 volunteers to monitor the election in each of the West Bank districts, as well as in East Jerusalem. The PDMC's network of NGOs conducted most of the recruiting, although volunteers were also mobilized through announcements placed in local daily newspapers. District by district, the PDMC organized training sessions for approximately 2,000 volunteers. By election day, the Central Election Commission accredited 1,400 of these volunteers as domestic elections observers. A parallel initiative among NGOs in the Gaza Strip disbanded in December as a result of disagreements among participants and fears of "getting ahead of the election process." In mid-January, the Gaza-based Palestinian Center for Human Rights organized a smaller monitoring effort with 37 volunteer monitors in the Gaza Strip.

During the pre-election and campaign period, the PDMC monitored each step of the electoral process including voter and candidate registration, the conduct of the campaign, election-day balloting and vote tabulation. It publicized its assessments through press releases and contributed to international monitoring efforts by sharing its information and analyses directly with each of the groups.

During the registration period, it assessed and offered recommendations on the efficiency and coverage of the registration canvas as well as the appeals and voter registry review process. (See Appendix R.) It then monitored the candidate registration process by soliciting complaints of violations from the public and candidates. In order to monitor violations in candidate campaigning it designed and distributed forms to its volunteers and candidates throughout the West Bank. From this exercise, it received dozens of complaints and was able to follow up on several of them such as the arrest of two candidates discussed in Chapter 3. On election day, the PDMC volunteer monitors observed balloting and the vote count in 85 percent of all West Bank polling stations and collected results from nearly 60 percent of the polling stations in the West Bank. In the days immediately following the elections, the PDMC compared its results with those of the CEC, international observers and candidate pollwatchers and released a preliminary report of its findings at a press conference five days following the elections.

The PDMC's effort benefited from the comparative experiences of experts from Guyana and Yemen who organized similar nonpartisan domestic monitoring efforts in their own transition elections and spent a total of three months in the West Bank and, earlier on, in the Gaza Strip imparting their experiences and providing direct training for the PDMC's organizers. Lawrence Lachmansingh spent two months during the summer of 1995 sharing his insights into the challenges and rewards of monitoring efforts he helped organize through the Electoral Assistance Bureau in Guyana. During the month leading up to the elections, Faris al-Sanabani provided the PDMC with advice on a recruitment strategy and training materials based on his 1993 experience organizing a similar election monitoring effort in Yemen.

In an effort to encourage regional exchange of experience and knowledge, PDMC hosted nine researchers from the Ibn Khaldoun Center in Egypt. NDI had supported the Ibn Khaldoun Center's monitoring effort for Egypt's November 1995 legislative elections. The researchers were able to witness the challenges that PDMC faced and how they overcame them well as to assess the differences and similarities of the political environments within which the monitoring took place.
After establishment in Jericho and the Gaza Strip in July 1994, the Palestinian Authority, began to assert limited authority that was provided for it in the interim agreements with Israel. In this period, the PA began managing security, economy and public administration. The PA, in coordination with the Israeli military and police forces, began to implement some limited security measures, including the establishment of checkpoints and the training of Palestinian security forces. However, the PA faced significant challenges in terms of political legitimacy and popular support. The PA struggled to gain the trust of the Palestinian population, who were skeptical of the new administration and its ability to deliver on the promises of peace and national independence. In some cases, Palestinian opposition leaders, such as Yasser Arafat, were seen as corrupt and out of touch with the needs of the Palestinian people. The PA's inability to deliver on its promises and its limited administrative capacity further eroded its support among the Palestinian population. In the end, the PA's struggle to assert its authority and establish itself as a legitimate political entity continued to be characterized by significant challenges and internal divisions. The Palestinian Authority, established under the Oslo Accords, faced a difficult road ahead as it sought to build a viable state and secure the future of the Palestinian people.
Recommendations for Future Elections

The current election system is in need of improvement to ensure fair and transparent voting processes. The following recommendations are made to address these issues:

1. Implement a paper-based voting system to reduce the risk of hacking and ensure the security of the vote.
2. Introduce a voter identification system to prevent fraud.
3. Establish a centralized election monitoring body to ensure transparency and accountability.
4. Increase voter education programs to inform citizens about their rights and responsibilities.
5. Implement a ranked-choice voting system to increase the fairness of the election process.

The government and election authorities should adopt these recommendations to improve the current election system and ensure free and fair elections for all.
The PUC is an important component in planning and policy making. The PUC has the ability to shape the future of utilities and their impacts. The PUC's role is to ensure that utilities operate in the best interests of the consumers. The PUC's decisions can have significant impacts on the affordability, reliability, and environmental sustainability of utilities. The PUC's work is critical to ensuring that utilities operate effectively and efficiently. The PUC's decisions can impact the cost of living, economic development, and the environment. The PUC's work is essential to ensuring a sustainable future for utilities and their customers.
The delegation was emphasized to bring the delegation leaders, including the delegation of the United Nations, who are the elected representatives of the people of the Palestinian Authority (PA), to discuss the issues of interest to the people of the Palestinian Authority. The delegation emphasized the importance of the PA in the region and the need for a peaceful and just peace process.

All political groups are expected to participate in the elections. The delegation emphasized the importance of free and fair elections and the need to ensure that the elections are conducted in an environment of transparency and accountability. The delegation also emphasized the importance of the role of international community in supporting the democratic process and ensuring that the elections are conducted in accordance with international standards.

The delegation stressed the importance of the PA in the region and the need for a peaceful and just peace process. The delegation emphasized the need for a comprehensive solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the importance of a two-state solution based on the principles of international law and the parameters of the Oslo Accords.

The delegation also emphasized the importance of the role of international community in supporting the democratic process and ensuring that the elections are conducted in accordance with international standards. The delegation emphasized the importance of free and fair elections and the need to ensure that the elections are conducted in an environment of transparency and accountability.

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The delegation also emphasized the importance of the role of international community in supporting the democratic process and ensuring that the elections are conducted in accordance with international standards. The delegation emphasized the importance of free and fair elections and the need to ensure that the elections are conducted in an environment of transparency and accountability.
The recent events that culminated in the decision of the Israeli government to allow the PLO to participate in the elections for the first time, in addition to the removal of some of the obstacles that have hindered the electoral process, have created a positive atmosphere that could lead to democratic change in the region.

The elections are significant because they provide an opportunity for the Palestinian people to express their will and establish a legitimate authority to represent them. The success of the elections will depend on several factors, including the participation of a significant number of voters, the integrity of the electoral process, and the ability of the political leadership to form a government that can effectively represent the interests of the Palestinian people.

The election process is fraught with challenges, and the international community should continue to provide support and guidance to ensure that the elections are free, fair, and inclusive. The election results will be a critical test of the commitment of the international community to support the Palestinian people in their quest for self-determination and statehood.
The delegation was impressed by the high level of turnout, all of which was expressed in the form of votes cast for the Palestinian candidates by the Palestinian people in the territories. We were pleased to see that the election process was free of violence and that the elections were conducted in a peaceful manner.

In the end, the results of the elections were announced, and the newly elected members of the Palestinian Council were sworn in. The council is expected to play a significant role in the future of the Palestinian people.

The delegation also visited several political parties and organizations in the territories, and they were impressed by the commitment of the Palestinian people to their national cause.

The delegation was also concerned about the situation in the territories and the need for international support to help the Palestinian people achieve their rights.

The delegation expressed its hope that the international community will continue to support the Palestinian people in their struggle for freedom and justice.
This second post-election statement to the public on behalf of the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) and the Election Monitoring Program (EMP) in Gaza and the West Bank and the United Nations Office for West Bank and Gaza, and on behalf of the women’s rights organization Maryam, which is working in the West Bank and Gaza, is intended to highlight some of the issues that have arisen during the campaign and to provide an overview of the situation as of January 24.

The fact that a protocol remained at a polling station for some time after it should have been delivered to the District Election Office was reported to us by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs. However, the absence of an official count at the polling station is unlikely to have any significant impact on the final results.

In Jerusalem, the Monitoring Program’s representative observed that the final results were released by the candidate’s agent with a representative of the election commission. However, the observer noted that there was no official count at the polling station.

In the West Bank, the Monitoring Program’s representative observed that there was no official count at the polling station. However, the observer noted that the final results were released by the candidate’s agent with a representative of the election commission.

In Gaza, the Monitoring Program’s representative observed that there was no official count at the polling station. However, the observer noted that the final results were released by the candidate’s agent with a representative of the election commission.

In all cases, the candidate’s agent released the final results without an official count. The Monitoring Program’s representatives observed that the candidate’s agents were in possession of the results, and that the candidate’s agents released the results to the public.

In all cases, the candidate’s agent released the final results without an official count. The Monitoring Program’s representatives observed that the candidate’s agents were in possession of the results, and that the candidate’s agents released the results to the public.

In all cases, the candidate’s agent released the final results without an official count. The Monitoring Program’s representatives observed that the candidate’s agents were in possession of the results, and that the candidate’s agents released the results to the public.

In all cases, the candidate’s agent released the final results without an official count. The Monitoring Program’s representatives observed that the candidate’s agents were in possession of the results, and that the candidate’s agents released the results to the public.
1. The pretrial conference and the means to present and examine
c1. The court's determination of the issues and the evidence to be presented.

c2. The pretrial conference shall be held in the courtroom and the

c3. The court's determination of the issues and the evidence to be presented.

c4. The court's determination of the issues and the evidence to be presented.

2. The pretrial conference shall be held in the courtroom and the

c1. The court's determination of the issues and the evidence to be presented.

c2. The pretrial conference shall be held in the courtroom and the

3. The court's determination of the issues and the evidence to be presented.

4. The court's determination of the issues and the evidence to be presented.

December 27, 1993
Clerk's Office
Hammer and Steel: An Analysis of Pro-AMMS Design
Joint Press Release
Appendix F 127
Appendix G

Central Election Commission
Press Release: Announcement of Appointments

Appendix G

Appendix 1

Central Election Commission
### Qualified Candidates

**Date:** 1996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>16</th>
<th>17</th>
<th>18</th>
<th>19</th>
<th>20</th>
<th>21</th>
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<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
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### Press Release

**Date:** 1996

- **Title:** Press Release
- **Date:** 1996
- **Content:**
  - [Text of Press Release]

### Table

<table>
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<th>Number of Candidates</th>
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<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>30</td>
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</table>

### Appendix

**Title:** Appendix H 131

- **Content:**
  - [Text of Appendix]

### 1996 Press Conference

**Date:** 1996

- **Title:** 1996 Press Conference
- **Date:** 1996
- **Content:**
  - [Text of Press Conference]

### Table

<table>
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<th>Number of Candidates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>30</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Appendix

**Title:** Appendix H 131

- **Content:**
  - [Text of Appendix]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Party/Affiliation</th>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>Total votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arab Bank Socialist Party</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6,813</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Islamic Jihad Movement (All-

A. Article 8 of all existing temporary laws that are in conflict with this law is hereby replaced by the following:

Article 1: The President of the Executive Committee is elected by a method of direct, simple, secret ballot, with a simple majority. The President's term is five years, renewable once.

Article 2: In the event of the President's death, resignation, or incapacity to discharge his duties, the Vice-President shall assume the President's duties, and the term of the President shall continue until the next election.

Article 3: The President is the representative of the Palestinian National Authority and is responsible for the implementation of its laws and decisions. He/she shall also represent the Palestinian Authority in international affairs.

Article 4: The President makes decisions in consultation with the Cabinet and the National Council.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team no.</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Opening of the Poll (if observed)</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Arrangements at the polling station:**
1. Are the polling station free from campaign material?
2. Are the ballot boxes located and visible to party agents?
3. Are party symbols displayed?
4. Are party agents present at the polling station?
5. Are there registered or unregistered observers present?

**Number of party/candidate agents present in the polling station:**
1. 1
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4
5. 5
6. 6
7. 7
8. 8
9. 9
10. 10

**Female observers present in the polling station:**
1. 1
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4
5. 5
6. 6
7. 7
8. 8
9. 9
10. 10

**Male observers present in the polling station:**
1. 1
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4
5. 5
6. 6
7. 7
8. 8
9. 9
10. 10

**Comments:**
- Male observers present in the polling station.
- Female observers present in the polling station.
- Party agents present at the polling station.
- Campaign material present at the polling station.
- Ballot boxes located and visible to party agents.
- Party symbols displayed.
- Registered observers present.
- Unregistered observers present.
- Total number of party/candidate agents: 10.
- Total number of female observers: 5.
- Total number of male observers: 5.
Appendix L

Final Results by Constituency
Palestinian Legislative Council Elections
Central Election Commission

GAZA STRIP CONSTITUENCIES:

DEIR AL-BALA'AH Constituency
Number of seats (8)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Elected Candidate</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fath Abu Medein</td>
<td>Fateh</td>
<td>12168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sa'al Al-Krouz</td>
<td>Fateh</td>
<td>11713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jumilah Saidem</td>
<td>Fateh (Female)</td>
<td>8511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibrahim Isma'il Ahmad Al-Habbash</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>7926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaffal Al-Masadder</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>7891</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Top Two Losing Candidates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Candidate</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sami Isma'il Messleh</td>
<td>Fateh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdel Fatah Al-Nouri</td>
<td>Independent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Gaza North Constituency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Elected Candidate</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yusuf Abu Safih</td>
<td>Fatah</td>
<td>12642</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuad Eid</td>
<td>Fatah</td>
<td>12057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helham Abu Raza</td>
<td>Fatah</td>
<td>10652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdul Rahman Hamad</td>
<td>Independent (Islamist)</td>
<td>10510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karim Zraah</td>
<td>Independent (PLFP)</td>
<td>9546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamal Al-Sharafi</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>7857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imad Al-Fahouj</td>
<td>Fatah</td>
<td>8529</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Top Two Leading Candidates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Elected Candidate</th>
<th>Top Two Leading Candidates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hani Safadi</td>
<td>Imad Al-Fahouj</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuad Eid</td>
<td>Helham Abu Raza</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

## Gaza City Constituency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Elected Candidate</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khaled Shafi</td>
<td>Fatah</td>
<td>58119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reda Sheshaa</td>
<td>Fatah</td>
<td>54997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nabil Al-Rayd</td>
<td>Fatah</td>
<td>40245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamil Al-Waiz</td>
<td>Fatah</td>
<td>40896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Najib Al-Za'Im</td>
<td>Fatah</td>
<td>39596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zyad Abu Ara</td>
<td>Fatah</td>
<td>31748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wajih Yaghji</td>
<td>Independent (Islamist)</td>
<td>31555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manas Mahomed Hamad El Li</td>
<td>Independent (Islamist)</td>
<td>23511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marwan Kamal</td>
<td>Independent (Fatah Affiliate)</td>
<td>25994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youssef Al-Shami</td>
<td>Independent (Female)</td>
<td>22067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essa Al-Shamir</td>
<td>Independent (Fatah)</td>
<td>18283</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Top Two Leading Candidates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Elected Candidate</th>
<th>Top Two Leading Candidates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reda Sheshaa</td>
<td>Najib Al-Waiz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaled Shafi</td>
<td>Khaled Shafi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>Name of Elected Candidate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Fazal Rehman Afridi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Shaukat Pervez Khan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**
- Fazal Rehman Afridi is the Chief Minister of the West Bank and Gaza.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Elected Candidate</th>
<th>Constituency</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sharif Ali Hussein Masha'i</td>
<td>Jericho</td>
<td>Fatah</td>
<td>30,846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musa Abu Sabha</td>
<td>Jericho</td>
<td>Fatah</td>
<td>25,316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamal Salah El-Shobaki</td>
<td>Jericho</td>
<td>Fatah</td>
<td>24,484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nabil Amer</td>
<td>Jericho</td>
<td>Fatah</td>
<td>22,193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muhammad El-Horani</td>
<td>Jericho</td>
<td>Fatah</td>
<td>20,917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rafeeq Shaker Darweesh Al-Nasib</td>
<td>Jericho</td>
<td>Fatah</td>
<td>17,542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zahran Abu Qubita</td>
<td>Jericho</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>15,414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Mohammad Husein Abu Al-Rish</td>
<td>Jericho</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>12,873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sulaiman Abu Sobieh</td>
<td>Jericho</td>
<td>Fatah</td>
<td>12,304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil Horrim Ghazal Al</td>
<td>Jericho</td>
<td>Fatah</td>
<td>10,034</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Elected Candidate</th>
<th>Constituency</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assal Abdul Qader (Salah Al-Tawan)</td>
<td>Bethlehem</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>17,774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Hassan Mohammed Al-Zeit</td>
<td>Bethlehem</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>9,531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Babik Aram Suleman Dawud</td>
<td>Bethlehem</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>6,613</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minni Tanas Abu Alaa</td>
<td>Bethlehem</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>5,817</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top Two Leading Candidates</th>
<th>Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heba Mohammed Abbadi Alzara</td>
<td>Fatah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khader El-Ibrahim</td>
<td>Independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Electoral Constituency</td>
<td>Number of Seats (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerusalem Constituency</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewar</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamam Al Salam</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asali</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Half</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Al-Fukai</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Top Two Leading Candidates</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top Two Leading Candidates</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beita</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Nabi al-Mahmoud</td>
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Appendix N 199

154. Practitioner's Election in the West Bank and Gaza
male candidates to be included in the process, or even in the list in general. The official registration process was not completed until late December, leaving little time for potential candidates to register in order to be included in the final list.

We are satisfied that the number of potential voters allowed to participate in the registration process was sufficient to ensure a fair and transparent election. The registration process was open to all candidates, regardless of their political affiliation or previous experience in politics. However, we do not believe that this level of openness was sufficient to ensure the integrity of the electoral process.

The official registration process was completed on December 31, 1996. The final list of candidates was published on January 2, 1997. This process was monitored by international observers, including the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Union (EU). The election law was also reviewed by a group of independent experts, who found that it was consistent with international standards for democratic elections.

In conclusion, while the process of registering candidates was open to all potential candidates, we are concerned about the limited time available for candidates to register and the lack of transparency in the process. We urge all political parties to work together to ensure a fair and transparent election. We also call on the international community to continue to monitor the election process and to provide support to ensure its success.
Appendix A 159

The worker on duty:

The worker on duty shall be responsible for the examination of the mail of employees, including the examination of the mail of employees who are on vacation or who are on leave of absence. The worker on duty shall have the power to open and inspect the mail of employees, including the mail of employees who are on vacation or who are on leave of absence. The worker on duty shall have the power to open and inspect the mail of employees, including the mail of employees who are on vacation or who are on leave of absence. The worker on duty shall have the power to open and inspect the mail of employees, including the mail of employees who are on vacation or who are on leave of absence. The worker on duty shall have the power to open and inspect the mail of employees, including the mail of employees who are on vacation or who are on leave of absence. 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2. Were you expecting such a visit?

85.3% of the respondents reported that they were awaiting the visit. 10.7% reported that they were not expecting the visit.

3. Did the team explain to you the necessary qualifications for registration?

87% of respondents said they were supplied with adequate explanations. 3% of respondents said they were not given an explanation.

4. Did the explanation of the qualifications made clear to you?

91.8% of respondents agreed that the explanations were clear. 8.2% said the explanations were not clear.

5. Did you agree to register in your electoral district?

81.5% of respondents said they did register in the electoral process.

6. Did you register to participate in the elections?

81.5% of respondents said they did register to participate in the elections. 11.8% of respondents said they did not register.

7. Why did you register?

Many reasons were given for not registering; including: not being present in the house when the team arrived, some respondents said they did not have the necessary qualifications to register, they did not have the necessary documents to register, or they did not have the time to register.

8. Did you receive information about the registration process?

1. More rigorous procedures regarding the submission of registration papers were carried out in the past few weeks. It is necessary to make sure that these procedures are followed in order to ensure that all eligible voters are able to register.

2. To ensure that all eligible voters are registered, we recommend that the CEC extend the registration period for two weeks. This will give more time for eligible voters to submit their registration papers.

3. More guidance for electoral officials on the process of registering voters is needed. This guidance should be provided in a clear and concise manner to ensure that all eligible voters are able to register.

4. We recommend that the CEC extend the registration period for two weeks. This will give more time for eligible voters to submit their registration papers. It is important to ensure that all eligible voters are able to register in order to ensure a fair and transparent electoral process.
About the Palestinian Domestic Monitoring Center (PDMC):

The Palestinian Domestic Monitoring Center (PDMC) is a non-partisan monitoring center, fully independent of the Elections Commission and all actors of the electoral process, in order to promote public confidence in the elections and protect voters' and candidates' rights.

The PDMC's primary role is to monitor the fairness of the electoral process, the voting process and counting of votes in the elections, as well as to provide a platform for the discussion of issues related to the election. The PDMC aims to promote public confidence in the elections by providing verifiable information and analysis of the electoral process.

The PDMC also conducts voter registration monitoring and monitors the implementation of the electoral law by the Palestinian Authority. The PDMC works with local, national, and international organizations to ensure fair and transparent elections.

Volunteers are asked to conduct their work in a neutral manner that facilitates monitoring of the electoral process. Volunteer monitors are asked to maintain a high level of professionalism and discretion in their work.

The PDMC's work is supported by a Board of Directors, which includes members from various political and civil society groups. The PDMC is committed to providing impartial and objective information about the elections.

The PDMC, this past week formed groups of volunteers to monitor the registration of voters in the West Bank.

From December 6-7, 70 volunteers monitored voter registration in Jerusalem, Hebron, Jericho, Nablus, Tulkarem, Tubas, and Balata. A total of 770 residents were canvassed. Volunteers chose a random sample of those residents polled.

Volunteers are asked to conduct their work in a neutral manner that facilitates monitoring of the electoral process. Volunteer monitors are asked to maintain a high level of professionalism and discretion in their work.

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The Carter Center brings people and resources together to resolve conflicts, promote democracy, fight disease, hunger, and poverty, and advance human rights worldwide. It is guided by the fundamental principles that all human beings are equal in dignity and achieve their highest potential. The Carter Center is named for the late President Jimmy Carter and his wife, Rosalynn. Founded in 1982 by Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter in partnership with Emory University, the Carter Center engages in nonpartisan peacemaking; promoting economic, social, and health development; and finding innovative solutions to lessen the impact of conflict and poverty on people around the world. From its headquarters in Atlanta, the Carter Center works alongside communities and governments to achieve specific goals in eight focus areas: peace and security, democracy, human rights, political process reform, poverty alleviation, disease prevention, and disaster risk reduction. The Carter Center is dedicated to establishing and implementing effective, sustainable solutions that improve the quality of life for people around the world.
The committee's oversight responsibilities include:

1. Reviewing the funding and budget of the government agencies and programs.
2. Conducting hearings and investigations into government affairs.
3. Monitoring government actions and policies.
4. Providing recommendations to the government.

The committee's jurisdiction includes:

- Executive Branch agencies
- Legislative Branch agencies
- Judicial Branch agencies

The committee has authority to:

- Investigate any matter related to government affairs.
- Oversee the implementation of government policies.
- Review and approve government appointments.
- Conduct investigations and hearings.

The committee's responsibilities are:

- Oversight of government affairs
- Monitoring government actions
- Providing recommendations
- Conducting investigations
- Reviewing government appointments

The committee's budget and funding are:

- Funded through the government budget
- Allocated based on the committee's responsibilities
- Subject to annual review and approval

The committee's membership includes:

- Members of the House of Representatives
- Members of the Senate

The committee's leadership includes:

- Chairman
- Ranking Member

The committee's staff includes:

- Professional staff
- Legislative assistants
- Researchers

The committee's procedures include:

- Conducting hearings
- Issuing subpoenas
- Reviewing documents
- Conducting investigations

The committee's records are:

- Available for public review
- Subject to confidentiality
- Protected by federal law

The committee's partner organizations include:

- Government Accountability Office
- Office of Inspector General
- Congressional Research Service

The committee's impact on government affairs includes:

- Influencing government policies
- Shaping legislation
- Providing oversight
- Conducting investigations

The committee's role in government affairs is:

- Essential
- Critical
- Vital

The committee's future goals include:

- Increasing transparency
- Enhancing accountability
- Improving government effectiveness

The committee's current initiatives include:

- Investigating government waste
- Reviewing government contracts
- Conducting hearings on government policies

The committee's impact on the public includes:

- Increased awareness of government affairs
- Improved understanding of government policies
- Increased participation in government affairs

The committee's future challenges include:

- Managing increased workload
- Navigating political landscape
- Addressing complex issues

The committee's strengths include:

- Strong track record
- Expertise in government affairs
- Effective leadership

The committee's weaknesses include:

- Resource constraints
- Staffing issues
- Political pressures