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Elections in the Maldives

March 22 People's Majlis Elections

Frequently Asked Questions

Asia

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

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Frequently Asked Questions

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Disclosure:

These FAQs reflect decisions made by the Maldivian elections authorities, to the best of our knowledge as of March 17, 2014. This document does not represent any IFES policy or technical recommendations.

When is Election Day?

Elections to the People's Majlis, the Maldivian parliament, are scheduled for March 22, 2014.

Who are citizens voting for on Election Day?

Citizens will cast their ballots to elect all 85 members of the People's Majlis. Elected parliamentarians will serve a five-year term.

Who can vote in the country?

All Maldivian citizens over 18 are eligible to vote. Eligible voters must be on the Register of Electors, the voter register, prior to Election Day and must present a valid photo ID to cast a ballot.

Those who will be away from their permanent residence on Election Day had until February 28, 2014, to re-register in the location they expect to be on March 22, 2014. Registration on Election Day is not permitted. This means voters who do not find their name on the register will not be able to vote.

How many registered voters are there?

There are over 240,000 eligible voters for the upcoming elections.

What is the structure of the government?

The Maldives is a democratic republic based on the principles of Islam. The head of government is the President, who, along with the Vice President, is elected to a five-year term and can serve a maximum of two terms, consecutive or otherwise. Current President Abdulla Yameen was elected in November 2013.

The legislative authority of the Maldives lies with the People's Majlis, a unicameral legislative body currently composed of 77 elected members serving five-year terms. The number of members will increase to 85 starting with these elections due to population growth.

The country is divided into 19 administrative atolls (groups of islands) and two cities. Each of these administrative atolls and Malé are considered separate administrative divisions and have a minimum of two elected members, with additional members elected if the population of the administrative division is over 5,000.

Judicial power is vested in the Supreme Court, High Court and Trial Courts, as established by the law. The Supreme Court is the highest authority for administration of justice; the Chief Justice is the highest authority in the Supreme Court.

Are there reserved seats for women? What is the gender balance within the candidate list?

There are no reserved seats for women. There are only 23 women candidates, out of 304.

What is the election management body? What are its powers?

Elections in the Maldives are managed by the Elections Commission (EC). It is an independent entity comprised of five members as mandated by the constitution. The EC manages and facilitates all affairs related to elections and public referendums, including announcing the date, declaring the results, registering political parties and verifying party financing.

The EC was in charge of maintaining and publishing the Register of Electors (voter register). However, in October 2013, the Supreme Court ruled that the Department of National Registration's database would be the main source to determine voter eligibility in future elections.

One member of the EC resigned in late-2013 for health reasons and the Chair and Vice Chair of the EC were dismissed by the Supreme Court on March 9, 2014, following proceedings (initiated by the Supreme Court) for contempt of court, leaving the EC with only two members. A new member of the EC was nominated by the President and approved by the People's Majlis on March 12, 2014. Since quorum for the EC is three members, it can proceed with finalizing preparations for Election Day.

Where are ballot boxes set up? What are the hours?

In the Maldives, polling stations are called ballot boxes. They are typically located in schools and administrative centers.

A "ballot box area" or voting area is the designated area for conducting the voting process. The ballot box area constitutes a 100-foot radius from the actual ballot box. It also includes the ballot box, and can cover parks, empty land and playgrounds, but not homes and roads. Police must remain outside this radius at all times, unless invited by the head of a ballot box. Polling booths are placed within the designated voting area.

Voting will take place from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. However, as in many other countries, voters who are in line by 4:00 p.m. will be allowed to vote.

How many ballot boxes¹ are set up on Election Day?

There are 473 ballot boxes for the People's Majlis elections. In Malé, 51 boxes are available for residents. An additional 79 boxes will be set up for voters who are permanent residents of other islands but will be in Malé on Election Day.

Tourism is one of the largest areas of employment in the Maldives. The law requires placement of ballot boxes in tourist resorts and industrial islands if more than 100 eligible voters re-register to vote in those locations. For the upcoming elections, 20 ballot boxes will be set up in resort islands and one ballot box will be placed in an industrial island.

Is out-of-country voting allowed?

Yes. Voting will be organized at Maldivian embassies and consulates in countries with a sizeable Maldivian population and with more than 300 registered voters. Ballot boxes will be placed in three cities: two in Trivandrum, India; two in Colombo, Sri Lanka; and one in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

How will voters with disabilities cast their ballots?

Voters with disabilities – blind persons or persons unable to place a mark on the ballot paper due to poor eye sight, and voters who have difficulty holding a pen due to a physical disability, old age, weakness and health conditions – may be assisted by a person who is also registered to vote at the same ballot box,² as long as this is approved by the head official at that ballot box. A person who can provide assistance may only do so for one voter, and will be required to provide their name, address and national identification number.

Where are votes counted and tabulated?

Once voting ends at 4:00 p.m., ballot boxes are sealed. At 4:30 p.m., ballot boxes will be opened in the ballot box area,³ where they are located. Counting is done by hand. Designated officials will count ballots, total the votes and announce results for their ballot box. Vote tabulation is televised live on all Maldivian channels.

¹ In the Maldives, ballot box also means polling station – they report results by ballot box, not polling station. Very few locations will have more than one ballot box; however, each one is in a separate room and has separate staff. Likewise, voter lists are created as ballot box voter lists, not polling station voter lists.

² See footnote 1.

³ In the Maldives, “ballot box area” is used to indicate the actual ballot box as well as the voting area.

Preliminary results will be announced and displayed in each ballot box area and then sent to the main counting center in Malé. The counting center will be operated by the Elections Commission, but not housed in the same building as the commission.

Ballot boxes that close early (in case 100% of registered voters already voted) must wait until 4:30 p.m. before starting the count.

Who can observe during Election Day? How can they get accreditation?

Individuals identified by political parties, candidates and nongovernmental organizations registered in the Maldives, and international organizations and individuals who request and receive accreditation may observe elections. Maldivian legislation differentiates between observers and monitors. Observers come from organizations as outlined above. Monitors are media representatives who also apply and receive accreditation. The main difference is that observers are not allowed to take photos or record video in the ballot box area.⁴

Transparency Maldives, the main domestic observation group, plans to deploy approximately 200 domestic short-term observers and 20 long-term observers. In addition, the Human Rights Commission of Maldives will deploy 55 short-term observers. The Commonwealth will deploy 11 international observers on Election Day. The European Union's Election Observation Mission has deployed a core team of five observers along with four long-term observers and approximately 20 short-term observers.

When will official results be announced?

Official results must be announced within seven days of Election Day.

How will election disputes be adjudicated?

Any individual with the right to vote, a contesting candidate, a political party, an approved election observer or monitor, or any election official may file a complaint, according to the law. The complaint should be lodged, in writing (or by phone on Election Day), at the National Elections Complaints Bureau in Malé, at any of the Atoll/City Complaints Bureaus or at any local Island Focal Point. A complainant can also file a petition with the High Court.

If any person conducts a criminal offence in contravention of laws and regulations of elections, only the Elections Commission (EC) can refer the matter to the High Court through the Prosecutor General.

The period for lodging electoral complaints begins when the EC announces an election and ends 14 days after official election results are announced.

⁴ In the Maldives, "ballot box area" is used to indicate the actual ballot box as well as the voting area.

Resources

- Constitution of the Republic of Maldives 2008 ([English](#), [Dhivehi](#))
- Elections (General) Act 11/2008 ([Dhivehi](#))
- Parliament Election Regulation 2014 ([Dhivehi](#))