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Election Day Observations Interim Parliamentary Elections in Kazakhstan 22 January 1995

Background: On 22 January 1995, interim parliamentary elections were held in four districts in Kazakhstan. Elections in these districts were held to fill vacancies created by resignations, deaths, and members being appointed to other government positions. The US Embassy determined that it was important to locate and train people in country to serve as official observers. These observers were to be deployed to at least two of the four districts, where the possibility of vote fraud and voter intimidation had been raised. Eleven Americans were identified for the observer mission. IFES Central Asian Regional Manager Gwenn Hofmann trained the group for their election day missions and served as an observer in the Almaty District.

In three of the four districts, eleven observers were sent in teams of two to meet with election officials and observe balloting. They were instructed to report any violations, misconduct, and/or complaints to the US Embassy. Districts canvassed by the observer teams included Almaty District, Semipalatinsk, and Cimkent.

Since the Embassy had received written information of potential misconduct and violations, a special three hour briefing and training sessions was conducted jointly by USAID Almaty, the Political Officer of the US Embassy, and IFES. The IFES briefing included information on the following aspects of the election day operations and processes:

Opening the Polls: Determine procedures for ballot security
Protocol information and accuracy
Voter registration lists and supplemental list processes
Set-up of voting area
Ballot box security measures

Processing Voters: Methods used to identify voters
Voting procedures
Multiple voting (family voting)
Ballot box security, ballot security
Home voting, portable ballot box security
Voter turnout
Candidate and domestic voters

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Counting Ballots: Justification of numbers of voters and voted ballots
Counting unused ballots, spoiled ballots, and voted ballots
Recount procedures and methods of tallying votes
Recording vote counts on protocols
Justification of final count to number of ballots received

In addition, observers were asked to look for incidents of voter intimidation inside or outside the voting area.

Findings: Observers noted that, in all three districts, election workers reported that the Central Election Commission (CEC) members held special training sessions for district level election officials and for poll workers in all areas of the election day process, but concentrated primarily on problem areas reported by international observer groups during the 7 March 1994 parliamentary and local elections. These areas included:

- * The need for more domestic observers;
- * Dealing with multiple and family voting;
- * Better training materials for district officials and poll workers;
- * Handling violations and complaints on election day;
- * Issues of transparency in the vote counting process.

It is important to note that even though there were no legislative changes in the election law between the 7 March 1994 and 22 January 1995 elections, considerable work was undertaken by the CEC to meet the standards set forth in the recommendations of IFES and other international group reports in terms of election day process and procedures. It was also clear that the problem areas addressed in the January 1995 training sessions did, indeed, cover many of the special areas of concern listed above.

Specifically, the CEC encouraged opposition candidates and political parties to run in the elections. In addition, the CEC worked with the candidates and political parties to encourage domestic observers in all election districts. Special credentials were provided and instructions were given to political parties and to election officials and poll workers on the rights and responsibilities of the observers. All international observers noted that most candidates had domestic monitors in every polling site and that all were properly credentialed. The American observer group discussed election day operations with the domestic monitors and determined that the credentialing process was fair, open, and well-defined.

The "family voting" issue was thoroughly discussed by the CEC during the pre-election training sessions and additional steps and safeguards were implemented to try to reduce the incidence of family voting. While all of the international observers noted family voting was still allowed in most areas, the numbers appeared to be significantly reduced relative to the 7 March 1994 elections. In the Cimkent District, election complaints and violations were filed with respect to family voting and in this area the CEC issued a special administrative ruling for the vote counting procedures.

In the Almaty District, the District Election Chairman showed the America observer teams the new training and information manuals issued by the CEC which dealt with election district issues, candidate monitors, and other special issues.

Conclusions: The American observer group found that the CEC made substantial efforts to incorporate new procedures, changes, and training into their preparations for the interim election. While many positive changes were made, it became clear that much work remains to be done with the CEC in terms of electoral law reform. In addition, training manuals require further revision for easier use and clearer definition of policies and procedures.

In the area of poll worker training, the CEC could use assistance in the development of a more comprehensive and professional poll worker training program, with new manuals and supporting documentation.

Voter information programs concerning each election would assist the citizens of Kazakhstan in understanding the election process more clearly and give them the ability to make appropriate choices in terms of candidate selection.

Candidates, political parties, and domestic observers need more in-depth training on their rights and responsibilities, and clearly election day workers must understand the function of this group of observers.

Vote counting is done in a state of organized chaos and new and more refined procedures must be implemented if the results of the election are to be considered credible and accurate. While the American observer group agreed that poll workers did the best they could given the training, supplies, and tools at their disposal, much can be done to improve the vote counting and recounting process.

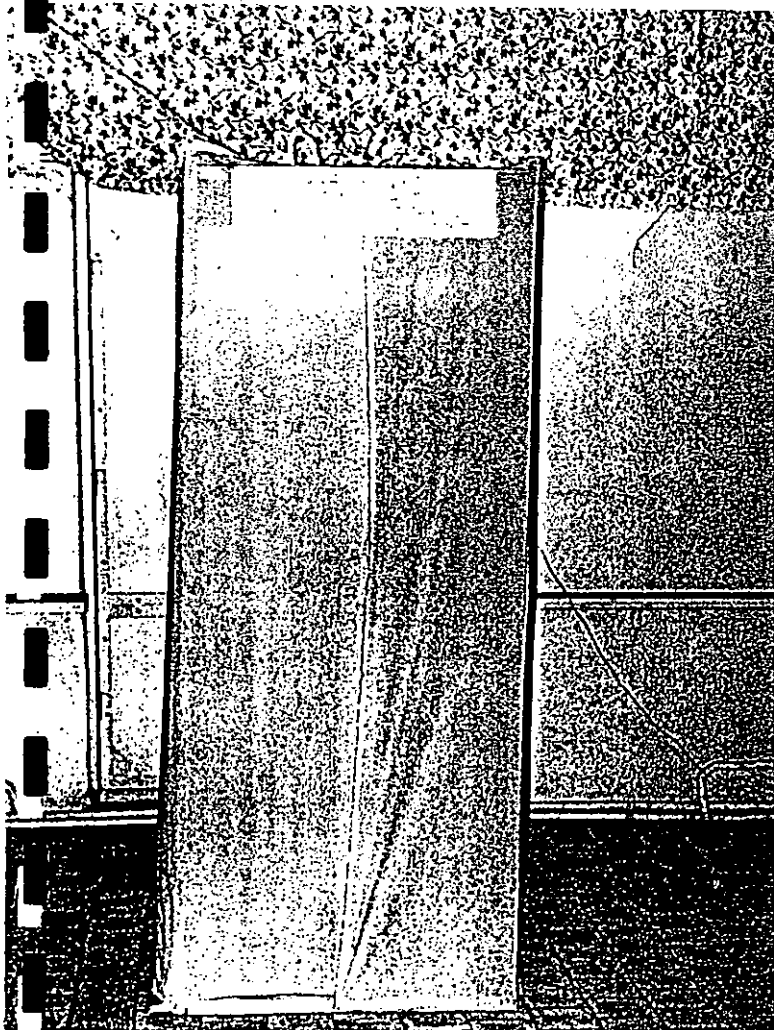
Election Update:

The Parliament of Kazakhstan, to which deputies were elected during the interim elections, was dissolved by President Nazarbaev based on a ruling of the Constitutional Court, which challenged the validity of the 7 March 1994 elections. In a case brought by a losing candidate, the Court ruled that the elections were flawed because authorities did not comply with the Constitution in the areas of training election officials, vote counting procedures, and providing absentee voting services to citizens living abroad.

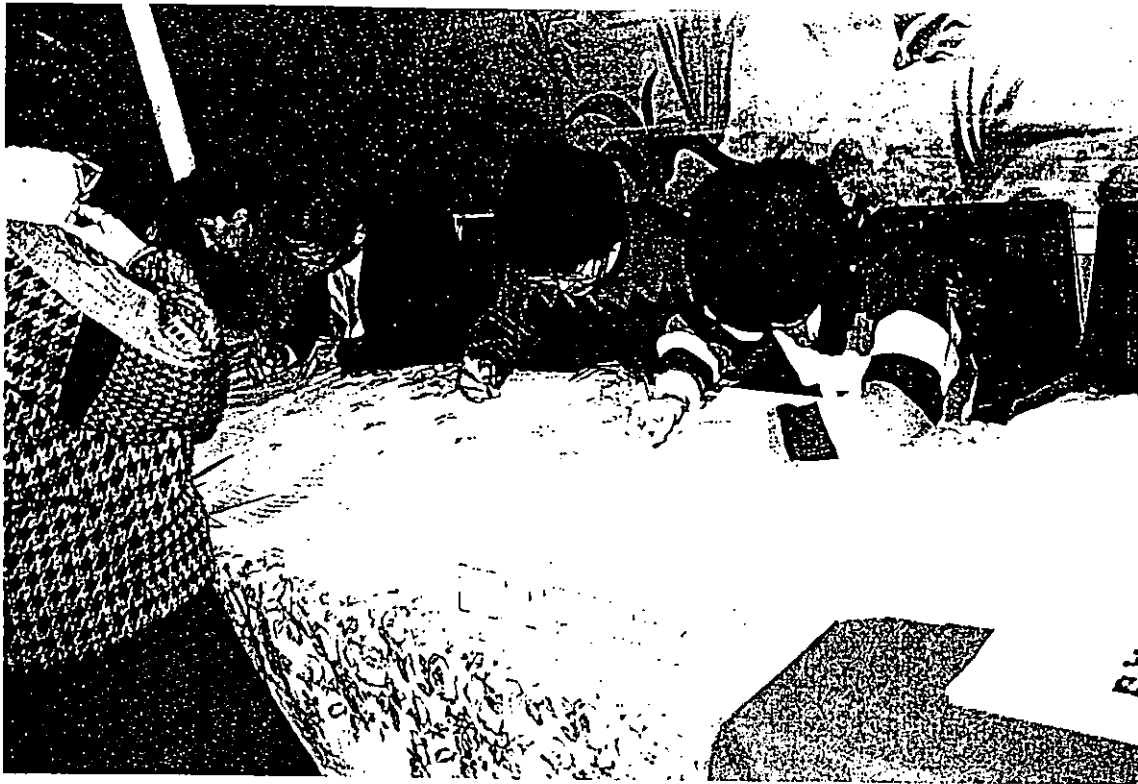
Kazakhstani newspapers reported that the Constitutional Court initially overturned the election in only one district, but the Central Election Commission stated that the same procedures were followed throughout the entire country. As a result, President Nazarbaev dissolved the entire parliament. New elections are to be called within a few months.

Attachment

Election Observation in Kazakhstan, Alma Ata District, January, 1995



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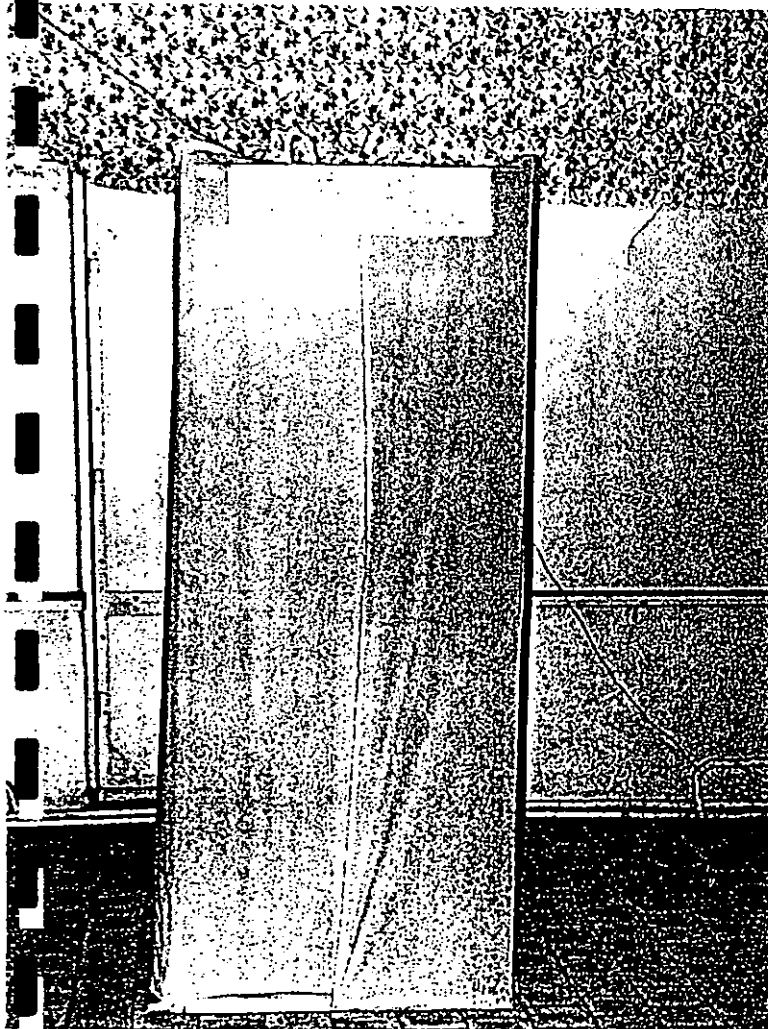
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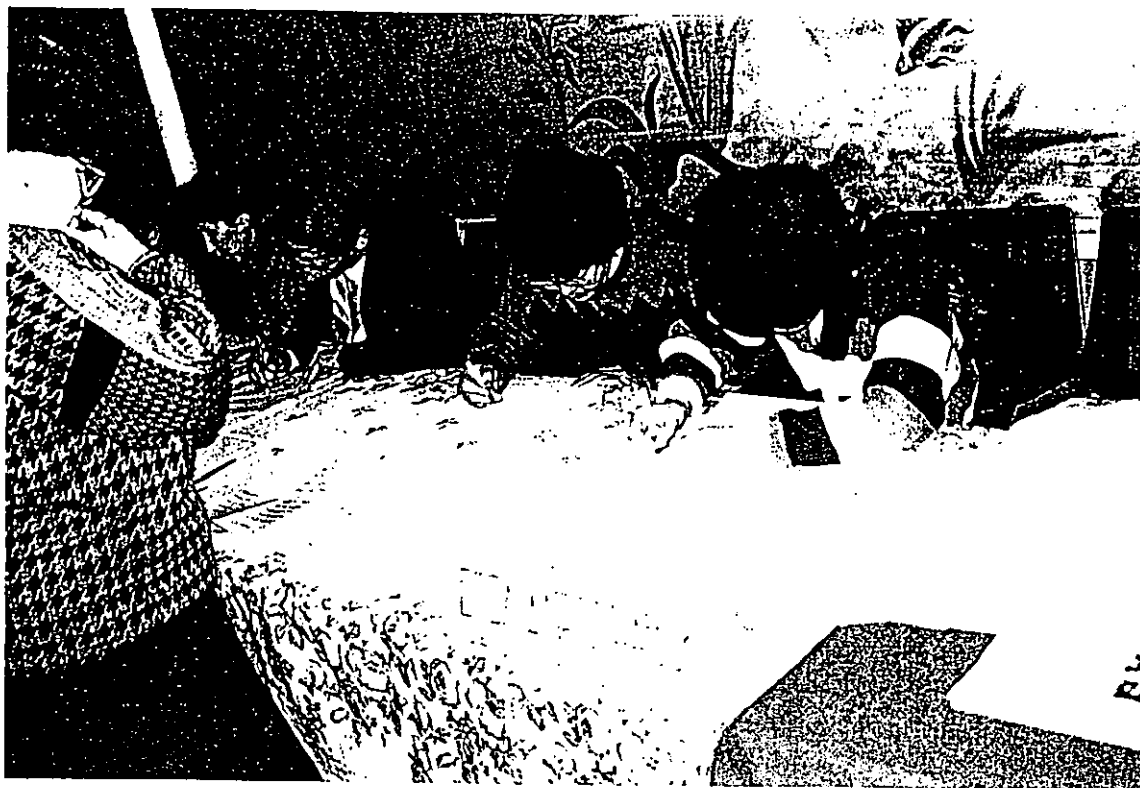
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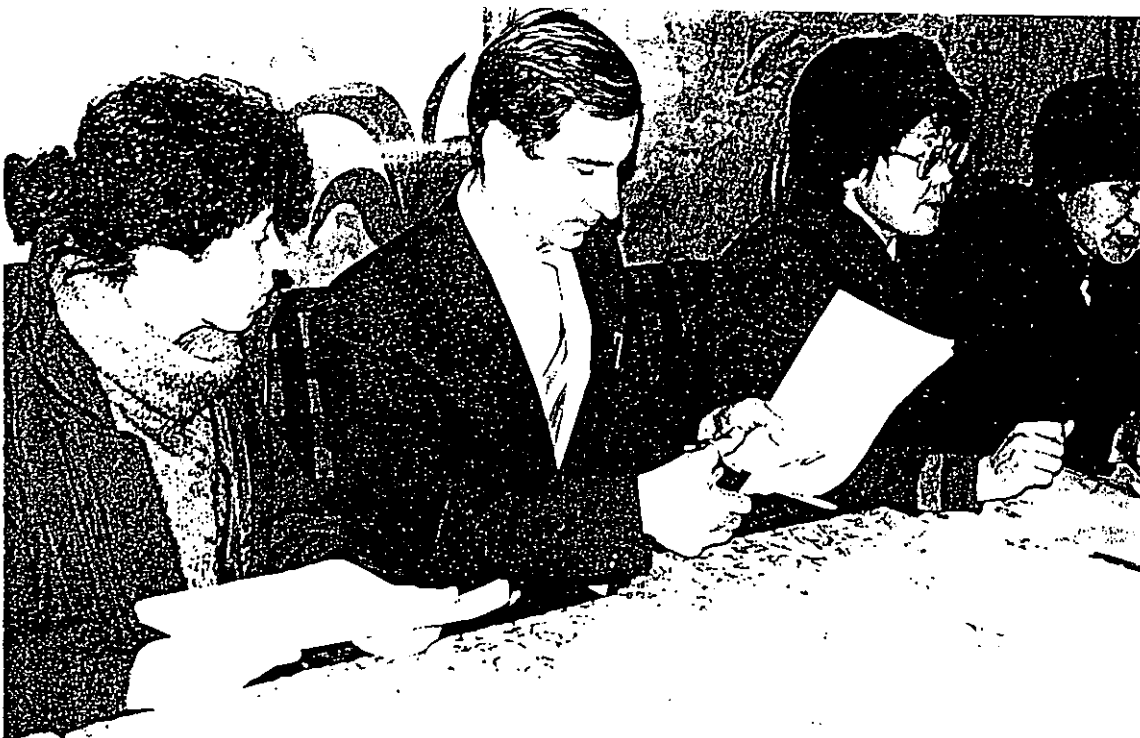
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