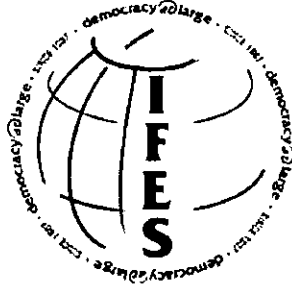Date Printed: 11/03/2008

JTS Box Number: IFES_13

Tab Number: 13

Document Title: IFES West Bank and Gaza Presidential
                      Elections- Final Report February 2005

Document Date: 2005

Document Country: West Bank and Gaza

IFES ID: R01945

5B8C9ECF-9531-4EA4-8B33-40BB0FC56011

CENTER FOR TRANSITIONAL and POST-CONFLICT GOVERNANCE

IFES WEST BANK AND GAZA
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS – FINAL REPORT

FEBRUARY 2005

CENTER FOR TRANSITIONAL and POST-CONFLICT GOVERNANCE

WEST BANK/GAZA PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS - FINAL REPORT
FEBRUARY 2005

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In preparation for the Palestinian Authority's Presidential elections on 9 January 2005, and in anticipation of future Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) and local elections, United States Agency for International Development/West Bank Gaza (USAID/WBG) issued a program description through the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening II (CEPPS II) cooperative agreement.

This program description was for an associate award to IFES for the provision of technical advice and operational assistance to the Palestinian Authority's Central Election Commission (CEC), and to the Elections Reform Support Group (ERSG). On December 10, 2004 USAID/WBG issued a pre-award letter authorizing IFES to begin implementation. This followed IFES' budget submission of December 7, 2004. IFES personnel arrived in-country on December 12, 2004 to start operations. The draft Cooperative Agreement was issued January 13, 2005 based on IFES' revised budget of January 5, 2005. The award was modified and signed by both parties on February 21, 2005.

The primary objectives outlined in the CEPPS II Program Description and highlighted in IFES' proposal included:

- Support the CEC with human resources in the areas of expertise required for the CEC to conduct the January presidential elections;

- Provide emergency election commodities and technical support for election administration. This may include: assistance in the establishment or development of facilities; procurement of election supplies and goods; security and arrangements for storage and transport of election materials, if needed; and, assistance in recruitment and training of permanent and temporary staff and international experts, as needed; and

- Continue to provide on-going expert assistance and Secretariat support to the coordinators and members of the Elections Reform Support Group, in order to maintain effective donor support to electoral administration in West Bank and Gaza.

The project, as requested by USAID/WBG, is to run through December 31, 2005 and is divided into two phases: Phase I includes project start-up through the presidential election period (from December 5, 2004 through January 30, 2005); Phase II includes the upcoming Palestinian Legislative Council and local elections and runs through the balance of 2005.

This activity report focuses on Phase I of the project, the Palestinian Presidential Elections which were conducted on January 9, 2005.

II. IMPLEMENTATION

The overarching objective of this project was to provide critical assistance to the electoral process so that it could be conducted according to schedule and in a credible and transparent fashion. IFES delivered on the following:

- A CEC request for a Public Relations Advisor to develop reports, strategy papers, briefings papers, or perform other tasks as requested by the CEC;

- A CEC request for other two additional media experts and a voter education expert;

- Several CEC requests for commodities (equipment, supplies and services);

- A Senior Advisor to coordinate the ERSG. This included his reporting, analyses, budgeting documents, policy papers, and election planning initiatives among other forms of documentation. In addition to the ERSG-specific secretariat work, the Senior Advisor and his colleagues provided election analysis for USAID to guide the Agency in its policy formulations.

Below is a detailed timetable describing the arrival of staff and the timing of key project activities during Phase I:

Phase/Week	Activity
I – December 5 – 11, 2004	Submission of response to Program Description A. Arrival of Jeff Fischer in Jerusalem/Ramallah to conduct Situation Report.
I – December 12 – 18, 2004	Arrival of Peter Erben to conduct an ERSG meeting. Arrival of IFES General Manager. Arrival of Public relations Advisor. Departure of Erben and Fischer
I – December 19 – 25, 2004	Arrival of Media Center Director Continued work of the General Manger and Public Relations Advisor.
I – December 26, 2004 – January 1, 2004	Arrival of Jeff Fischer. Continue work of the General Manager, Public Relations Advisor, and Media Center Director
I – January 2 – 8 , 2005	Arrival of Peter Erben Continued work of Fischer, General Manager, Public Relations Advisor and Media Center Director. Continued ERSG work.
I – January 9 – 15 , 2005	Continued work of Erben, Fischer, General

	Manger, Public Relations Advisor and Media Center Director.
I – January 16 – 22, 2005	Post-election evaluation.
I – January 23 – 29, 2005	Post-election evaluation.
I – January 30 an 31	Submission of post-election evaluation.
II- February – December 2005	ERSG support work continues.

III. STAKEHOLDERS

The Palestinian Central Elections Commission (CEC); an independent entity with exclusive authority for conducting the Presidential elections was the key beneficiary of immediate operational and technical assistance needed prepare for the January 9, 2005 elections. The CEC was established in October 2002 and is composed of 9 commissioners who are all lawyers and members of the Palestinian judiciary.

The IFES advisory team consisted of:

- Jeff Fischer, Director, Center for Transitional and Post-Conflict Governance (CTPCG);
- Peter Erben, Senior Advisor, CTPCG;
- Christian Donn and Sergio Fraile, experts in media production;
- Pauline Dion, an elections specialist to work on voter education, and
- Ric Curnow, a public relations and media expert.

The IFES team worked in close contact with Ammar Dwaik, Chief Elections Officer of the CEC. Mr. Dwaik was instrumental in assisting in the development of partnerships between the team members and CEC senior staff members in media relations, voter education, operations, and administration. IFES also worked closely with Mr. Bah'a Bakri, Chief of Electoral Affairs, Ms. Dima Abu Ghoush, former Media Section Head. In addition, IFES worked with Mr. Mohammad Said, Chief Administrative Officer in the areas of vendor payments and logistics.

In addition, IFES worked closely with USAID/WBG Democracy and Governance Officer Peter Wiebler. USAID's substantial involvement in this election support program revolved around approval of the implementation plan and key personnel and general monitoring of project implementation particularly in relation to the commodities procurements.

The Elections Reform Support Group (ERSG), the donor coordination group for the Palestinian Territories, was also a key stakeholder in the election process and a crucial contact for IFES. Since 2003, IFES has provided coordination support to the ESRG through funding by USAID/WBG. This group, consisting of leading international donors to the Palestinians (which includes the European Union, the United States, the United Nations and Russia) was established in 2002 in order to provide a forum for the coordination of international support for the election process and to build broad consensus on election reform issues.

IV. DETAIL OF PROJECT ACTIVITY

On December 20, the IFES Project Administrator participated in a briefing with Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) representatives at their base in Bet El, not far from the checkpoint into Ramallah, which is used by diplomats and others on official business. The IDF explained the strategy for relaxing IDF presence at all checkpoints during the election period, and for sensitizing Israeli troops to international observers and others who might wish to travel throughout the Palestinian territory. IFES, along with two other USAID-funded NGO representatives, were given an opportunity to present the details of their missions, and to discuss with the IDF how best to identify themselves to guards at checkpoints.

In order to be closer to the CEC, IFES advisors moved to Ramallah on December 22, 2004. Within a week of their arrival, the team was provided with USAID/WGB identification cards to enable them to pass through checkpoints more efficiently.

Obtaining clearance to enter Gaza proved difficult and almost impossible prior to the elections. IFES applied for clearance through USAID/WBG and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Office of Palestinian Relations. The Ministry coordinated its Gaza travel clearance through the UN, EU and NDI observer missions. Not accredited as an observer mission, IFES did not fall easily within any of the three groups. Ultimately, the IFES team received clearance to travel to Gaza on January 6, 2005 and subsequently traveled there on January 7, 2005 and January 11, 2005. However, Jeff Fischer did not receive Israeli clearance and did not travel. Because CEC headquarters staff is prohibited from traveling to Gaza, the media relations staff organized the Gaza media center via telephone and email.

Just prior to the elections, IFES contacted USAID/WBG and sought approval for the purchase of educational materials and their subsequent publication in Arabic-language newspapers. IFES also provided USAID/WBG with direct insight into the activities of the CEC on Election Day.

A. IFES Advisors and the CEC

Although the IFES team members were assigned interlocutors within the CEC, the climate allowed for opportunities to work with staff in all areas of the CEC. The exception to this was in the area of Voter Education. IFES' Voter Education Specialist arrived following the launch of the CEC's education campaign, and although she had prepared herself by reading the available information, she was unable to fully engage with the voter education staff. The CEC Voter Education staff was reluctant to discuss the execution of the program, which differed from the plan as described on the website. The language barrier between them further exacerbated the already underlying communication difficulties.

Following a series of conversations between the advisor, the voter education staff and the CEO, IFES and the CEC agreed to shift the advisor's focus away from voter education and instead have her assist the other IFES advisors in dealing with the media centers and

6

other related activities. At the conclusion of her assignment, the Voter Education Advisor prepared a list of observations regarding the implementation of several campaign and strategic recommendations for the legislative elections, which are attached.

As the election date approached, the need to focus on both the CEC Media Section and the operations of the Media Center occupied the entire IFES team. Team members, despite being termed "advisors," took a more active role in the management of the Media Center. This allowed the CEC's to appear professional and effective to the international press and observers.

Beyond providing commodities and infrastructure support to the Media Center, IFES supported the addition of temporary staff seconded to the CEC Media Section, who worked on both Media Center and CEC media issues. The temporary staff included a Media Center Coordinator, an IT specialist, a Graphic Design Specialist, Translators, and Interpreters. The hiring of additional translators was of particular importance as it helped ease the bottleneck in the CEC's processing of important documents, a task normally handled by a single staff translator.

B. Commodity Procurements

On December 22, 2004 IFES met with the Chief Elections Officer of the CEC, to discuss the procurement of commodities and the funding of media centers in Ramallah and Gaza City. The CEO indicated that purchasing requests would come to IFES via the CEC's Chief of Administration.

After brief consultations, IFES and the CEC agreed that while the commodity needs were not overwhelming at the time (with less than a month to go before the elections), IFES could nevertheless be useful to the CEC for last-minute purchases. The CEC and IFES agreed that IFES would provide payment directly to the vendors of goods and services as requested by the CEC. A protocol was established for requesting assistance from IFES which involved an exchange of emails and IFES payments directly to vendors.

During the course of the remaining days prior to the elections, the CEC requested and IFES agreed to provide funds for the following items:

- The purchase of a backup generator in Gaza City;
- The rental of backup generators for the CEC headquarters;
- The rental of approximately 1,200 handheld radios for CEC staff throughout the territories;
- The purchase of fax machines for CEC headquarters to be used during the counting process;
- The purchase of newspaper advertising space and supplements; and
- The rental of two additional vehicles for one month, plus taxi service on the 9th and 10th of January 2005.

IFES also used this protocol to procure goods and services for the Media Center, with the understanding that such costs would be covered entirely by IFES. While this system

7

worked well in relation to the Media Center in Ramallah, circumstances made it more difficult in Gaza City. This was due to the fact that IFES staff members were not permitted to travel to Gaza until two days before the elections. IFES was able to obtain guidance regarding the location and material needed for its media center from the DEC press office in Gaza City which was extremely helpful.

The below list summarizes individual procurement actions associated with organizing the Ramallah Media Center:

- Rental of space
- Furnishing of space, including some light construction
- Rental/purchase and installation of computer equipment and Internet access
- Rental/purchase and installation of television equipment
- Catering
- Staffing (adjunct to the CEC)
- Decorations
- Interpretation and translation services
- Related communications and transportation costs
- Press kit materials
- Photography services

IFES provided payment for some goods and services during the Media Center's operation. The CEC provided invoices for the agreed-upon goods and services to IFES approximately six days following the elections. As previously arranged with the CEC, IFES has paid vendors directly based on the invoices presented by the CEC and in accordance with confirmation by relevant IFES/CEC staff that the goods and services were delivered as agreed.

C. Issues

IFES entered the election preparation process shortly before the elections, at a time when most donor funds were already committed to meeting the majority of the needs of the CEC. The CEC Chief Elections Officer and Chief of Administration made this clear at the beginning of the process. Based on this situation, IFES was not in a position to advise or otherwise participate in this aspect of the procurement process. Furthermore, with other electoral processes under their belt and little time before the election itself, CEC staff was not receptive to questions regarding the "why" of the materials being procured.

To save time identifying appropriate vendors for Media Center related goods and services, the CEC procurement staff took the lead. Delays in decision making (particularly in the preparation of the service agreement between IFES and the Ramallah Municipality for the rental of the Ramallah Cultural Palace) threatened to undermine the establishment of the Center. However, these issues were resolved and the Center opened and provided the services as planned.

Despite the challenge described above, IFES was able to provide some last-minute support to the Voter Education Department in the form of payment for advertisements in the three largest local newspapers for three days just prior to the election, and an eight-page supplement inserted into the January 8 and 9 editions.

Early on in the project, IFES developed a strategy for prompt payment for the goods and services requested by the CEC. However, because essential information (particularly wire transfer information) was not made available by the CEC prior to Election Day, IFES was only able to process these payments after the election.

Some of the vendors were aware of this complication, but the majority were not. Naturally, as soon as the election concluded, vendors began to request immediate payment, or payment prior to the four-day 'Eid al-Adha' celebration. IFES was able to obtain from the CEC the additional information required to affect the needed wire transfers to the appropriate vendors.

D. Media Centers

The Media Center's primary function was to provide information and support to the media to facilitate coverage of the 2005 Palestinian Authority Election. Through this activity the Media Center was in a position to be responsive to the needs of other stakeholders as well.

During the days of its operation, the Media Center provided the following services:

- Regular press conferences and/or announcements by the CEC Head of Media Department;
- The presence of CEC personnel and/or Media Liaison team to provide information and assistance;
- Access to election results and information via 20 PC's and 30 additional ports to allow journalists to connect to the network;
- Screening of election results and election footage (counting, results aggregation etc.) on large screens placed in the conference room;
- Internet access including the election web-site;
- Provision of work stations and tables; and
- A dedicated raised television camera platform.

In mid-December, upon arrival in Ramallah, IFES advisors met with international media representatives to assess the CEC's media center needs. The importance of the 2005 elections would generate all of the media attention for that period, with up to 1,500 journalists and crews expected to cover the event.

i. Ramallah

CEC officials told IFES they wanted a Media Centre that would present a view of Palestine different from typical images such as the destruction of the Muqata, the

9

construction of the wall or the violence following the second Intifada. To put the best possible face on the CEC, the Media Center would need to be state-of-the-art in terms of communications infrastructure and furnishings.

IFES advisors visited a number of locations previously identified by the CEC staff, eventually settling on the Ramallah Cultural Palace, a new structure in the Al-Masyoun area of Ramallah. The Palace was built by the Japanese government, is managed by the UN and owned by the Ramallah Municipality. Approximately 57 nationals were employed to assist with the operation of the Ramallah media center.

ii. Gaza

Due to delays and restrictions on travel to Gaza, neither IFES advisors nor CEC headquarters staff were able to travel to Gaza City during the days before the elections. The headquarters team discussed the arrangements and layout of the Ramallah Media Center, providing guidelines for the establishment of a modified facility in Gaza. The CEC and IFES determined it was unnecessary to create a center exactly like the Ramallah center in Gaza, since it was apparent that the number of people using the center would be considerably smaller. The Gaza center therefore was structured as a satellite of the Ramallah center, with an uplink to the Media Center, PCs and ports for Internet transmissions. The Gaza center was designed to accommodate 75-100 people.

The Media Center was set up on the second floor in the Grand Palace Hotel, Gaza. Six members of the Gaza DEC managed the Media Center operations.

1. Security

The IFES team discussed security issues with the CEC staff as they pertain to the Media Center. The CEC did not identify issues over and above the normal access procedures. However, IFES set up a system to control access and direct traffic in the parking lot and surrounding areas. Local police were responsible for the perimeter of the center, and the Ramallah Municipality provided security guards for crowd control inside the building. This arrangement was sufficient for the purposes of the event, but neither the police nor the security guards were sufficiently trained or briefed, which created occasional problems in securing the building.

Fortunately, and most likely due to the nature and the expected outcome of the elections, no serious security problems such as large crowds, campaign-related incidents, or worse, took place at the Media Center.

2. Schedule

The Media Center was in operation from January 4-11, 2005. On January 8-10, 2005 the Center was open to the press, with time before and after for assembly and dismantling. On these days the Media Center was in operation from 0800 to 2400. On all other days, the Media Centre operated on normal business hours.

3. Accreditation

Like the international observers, journalists needed accreditation from the Israeli Foreign Ministry and the Palestinian Ministry of Information to allowed freedom of movement throughout the region as well as inside various polling stations. The CEC wanted an in-house database of accredited journalists, so it set up a second accreditation process to facilitate access to the Media Center and the Muqata. This second accreditation process had the added effect of keeping the total number of journalists who would be using the Media Center at one time to a manageable level.

Accreditation packets consisted of the appropriate identification cards, a guidebook to the voting and counting process in English and Arabic, a manual for observation, UN Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) maps to assist in locating towns, villages and checkpoints, a copy of "This Week in Palestine" and a photo CD titled "This is Palestine."

4. Level of Use

There are no compiled statistics on the profiles of all of the persons accredited by the CEC, but a total of 904 applications were processed. Between 40 and 400 journalists were in the center at the non-peak and peak hours respectively. Several VIPs used the press center, such as President Jimmy Carter, Javier Solana, Secretary General of the Council of the European Union, and candidate Mustapha Barghouti.

Visiting the Media Center two days before the elections, the IFES team noted that the Media Center staff had fulfilled all the requirements set out by the headquarters staff. They created an environment that effectively supported the media representatives and international observers posted in Gaza. More than 50 journalists used the center on a daily basis. More than 200 were present during Election Day. Among others, the Al-Jazeera, Al-Arabiya and Abu Dhabi networks conducted live broadcasts, including interviews, from the Media Center.

A full report on Media Center activities can be found in the appendices of this report.

E. Voter Education

The CEC's voter education program was launched before the arrival of the IFES advisor in voter education. The IFES advisor nevertheless has sketched a brief overview and observations on the voter education program, which is presented below.

The CEC 2005 program consists of motivational messages to be transmitted via posters, newspaper advertisements, billboards, leaflets, and radio and television spots. Currently, the West Bank/Gaza territory is served by 23 radio stations, 16 television stations and three daily newspapers. Posters listed a toll-free (within the West Bank/Gaza) number to the CEC for information, and while it was slow to receive customer calls during the first week of operation, usage went up significantly; on Election Day, people reported that the lines were constantly busy.

At the time of the launch, the issue of where and how East Jerusalem (a place with mixed Palestinian/Israeli authority and population) voters would cast their ballots was still being discussed. A second wave of educational efforts was launched in early January, after a December 29, 2005 agreement between the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli government permitting voters to vote in two general areas (J1 and J2). Voters in East Jerusalem have access to Arabic-language newspapers but no radio and television access, and the CEC noted that most posters promoting the elections or the candidates were torn down rapidly. As a result, the CEC sent volunteers door-to-door to provide voters with information on where they should vote under J1 (Palestinian Authority) or J2 (Israeli Authority) administration.

In the final week before the election, the CEC published advertisements including the posters and leaflets, with additional posters describing the voting steps. From January 7-9, 2005 the CEC published an 8-page supplement including information on the voting process, special instructions for civil registry voters, and brief candidate profiles.

To accommodate the people who did not get their names on the voter register, the voter education section added radio and print announcements telling voters to go to their Civil Registrar's office to get information about where they should vote.

V. POST ELECTION ACTIVITIES

Over the past few weeks the Jerusalem-based Interim Project Administrator settled a number of procurement related issues that arose from the first phase of the project. These included the payment of invoices and the resolution of local hire compensation irregularities.

Working together with the Interim Project Administrator, the Washington-based IFES Program Associate helped to resolve payment of outstanding CEC invoices and additional finance-related issues. IFES' Home Office Financial Analyst was also assigned these tasks, ensuring the payment and processing of additional invoices and field expense reports received during the close-out phase of the project.

The Interim Project Administrator also investigated a number of procurement items that will be need for the life of the project, such as the rental of office space and vehicles. He solicited and received numerous bids for each of the items and provided the information in the form of information memorandums.

V. CONCLUSIONS

A. CEC Assistance

Following the January 9 election, IFES conducted a technical needs analysis. The objective of the needs analysis was to evaluate the experiences of January 9 and modify

the assistance program to best support the next cycle of elections conducted by the Palestinian Central Election Commission (CEC).

IFES aims to continue to assist the CEC in the areas of organizational and strategic planning and in strengthening its independence over the long term. Toward this end, IFES is prepared to continue its support of the CEC's need to fill skill gaps in human resources which are required by the elections calendar in an environment with significant political and logistical challenges. The CEC has expressed a need for up to five seconded experts.

In order to serve as a further resource to the CEC, IFES recommends the development of a "Lessons Learned" forum to allow various officials to review successes and challenges associated with the Presidential elections and discuss the implementation of elections. IFES also recommends developing an elections workshop to provide a forum for CEC members and staff to assemble an operational plan and budget for the PLC elections.

B. Media Center

IFES recommends the continuation of support to the CEC Media Section by re-establishing and managing the Media Centers for the CEC in Ramallah and Gaza City and by creating a permanent capacity for this function inside the CEC and its district offices. In addition, IFES recommends that a consultant to coordinate procurement activities associated with the needs of the CEC in the conduct of the PLC elections be provided.

i. Observations

- The CEC's decision not to release preliminary results meant that it lost momentum during the crucial moments of the election; United States President George Bush called to congratulate Abu Mazen before the results were announced.

- The CEC senior staff, few of whom had direct experience in media relations before the elections, occasionally changed procedure or deviated from the announced schedule or event program.

- The use of a press pool, with one feed from inside the theater area, was effective. However, since no cameras (including still) other than the main camera were permitted inside the theater, the number of persons utilizing the theater space was reduced significantly below capacity.

- Controlling the use of cameras, particularly still cameras, was challenging; occasionally, journalists attempted to sneak cameras into the theater after they were informed it was not permitted.

- The size of the Ramallah Cultural Palace facilitated the media's interviews of candidates, political parties and other concerned persons at many convenient locations.

- Many journalists were able to base their operations out of the Media Center as it provided sufficient satellite, Internet access, space and computer equipment (as well as food) for the duration of the elections. As a result, they were on hand any time an announcement was expected.

ii. Recommendations

- Each team associated with the Media Center (hosts, accreditation, liaison officers, VIP handlers) should receive sufficient pre-event training in order to be able to start work immediately without requiring constant supervision.

- Each team should have a leader who reports to the Media Center Coordinator on a regular basis, (i.e. at the beginning and end of each day), to review issues that have arisen, changes in procedure, and generally ensure smooth communications between teams.

- Administrative delays due to CEC policies regarding media-center-related procurement decisions created unnecessary bottlenecks, when the opposite effect was intended.

- The media would have benefited from more information provided by the CEC at regular intervals by the assigned liaison officers. While the limit on information may have been justified, the next election event, covering nearly 100 elected positions, will necessitate a nearly constant flow of information.

- The decision making process must be faster to avoid missing crucial deadlines. A truly independent CEC senior staff must have the authority to make decisions without the actual or perceived threat of being over ridden.

C.Voter Education

IFES' observations and recommendations to the CEC in the area of voter education are incorporated in a proposed strategic approach to the legislative elections. They are summarized as follows:

i. Observations

- No civil society organizations were consulted or asked to otherwise participate in the implementation of the program.

- As far as can be ascertained, and possibly due to the time frame, no input was solicited from the District elections officers.

14

- Although the life situations and therefore perhaps the motivational issues vary between the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the CEC only developed a regional message for the Jerusalem voters.

- CEC officials addressed the issues of voting in Jerusalem and by persons who were on the civil but not voter register in press conferences. However, the voter education messages did not change significantly in light of this new information.

ii. Recommendations

- The CEC should develop a mechanism to measure the reach and effectiveness of its voter education campaign for the just-concluded presidential election and use whatever feedback is obtained in crafting a plan for the legislative elections.

- Consideration should be given to the reach, targeted constituency and motivational skills that many NGOs have. Civil society NGOs in particular can play a useful role in maintaining a high level of interest in the elections.

D. ERSG

The continuation of IFES support of the ERSG is also recommended. Peter Erben, who has been providing secretariat services to the ERSG since 2003 will continue to support the donor group.

VII. Appendices

Appendix A: IFES Media Center Palestinian Authority Elections 2005, Final Report

Appendix B: Central Elections Commission Sample Media Relations Strategy

Appendix C: IFES Voter Education Plan for the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) Election

Appendix D: IFES –West Bank/Gaza Presidential Elections 2005 Photo Presentation

APPENDIX A:

CENTER FOR TRANSITIONAL and
POST-CONFLICT GOVERNANCE

Media Center Palestinian Authority Elections 2005
Chris Donn, Pauline Dion and Sergio Fraile

FINAL REPORT
January 2005

INTRODUCTION

A Media Center (MC) to cover the events related to the Presidential Election in Palestine was established in a very short time-frame. We had 25 days to brainstorm, plan, set-up and dismantle the Media Center. We found this time-frame a bit tight but appropriate to conduct a smooth operation. A few more days would have been essential for reaching perfection in the above described activities; particularly with regard to working out reliable back up plans should any failure occur.

PLANNING THE MEDIA CENTER

Planning the Media Center set-up took a relatively short time since we counted on the brainstorming sessions and professional experience.

In a technical sense the MC provided the media and other users with a facility far beyond their expectations. Comments from a very broad swath of media were extremely complimentary and, in terms of the MC being a "work area and home" for the media, the MC was extremely successful. The MC had reliable broadband internet access, a constant power supply, more than an adequate number of PCs and ports where the media could connect. In addition, food and drinks were available during working hours and there was plenty of space and other facilities. Many journalists preferred to work in and from the MC rather than their accommodation, which speaks for itself.

1

It is fair to state, however, that the media could have been better served in terms of the information made available to them, since there were few press releases on the display. While there were a range of reasons for this, it is an area that requires attention for the next event as information needs are liable to be significantly greater. The media liaison officers in general and their helpdesk were not visible enough to the media.

The MC was planned to cope with visitor/users numbers well in excess of what turned out to be the case. This, however, would have been a fairly marginal factor in terms of cost and effort.

ROLE

The MC had the primary role of providing information and support to the media to assist their coverage of the 2005 Palestinian Authority Election. The MC also had an important role in providing information to a range of other stakeholder groups.

This role was achieved by:

- Regular press conferences and/or announcements by the CEC Head of Media Department;
- The presence of CEC personnel and/or Media Liaison team to provide information and assistance;
- Access to election results and information via 20 PC's and 30 additional ports to allow journalists to connect the network (the amount of connections was found appropriate);
- Screening of election results and election footage (counting, results aggregation etc) on large screens placed in the conference room;
- Internet access including the election Website;
- Provision of work stations and tables; and
- A dedicated raised TV network area.

After meeting with some media representatives we felt it hard to find a story in international journalism that could take the spotlight off this election (although the Asian Tsunami crisis and its aftermath deprived many journalists from covering the Palestinian Presidential Elections). We expected some 1500 journalists to visit and use the premises at Media Center (the passing away of Mr. Arafat was covered by far more than 2,000 journalist).

In the end, the final number of journalist accredited was much lower possibly due to the outbreak of the Asian Tsunami crisis and its aftermath.

The maximum number in attendance at any one time was in the order of 400, with the number being less than 40 in non-peak times. At very few times were the facilities of the MC ever fully utilized or stretched.

Although the number of accredited journalists to the Ministry of Information would have very much exceeded the capacity of the premises, a further accreditation was issued to them by the CEC thus giving them access to the Media Center. Accredited visitors were welcome to utilize the MC facilities at any time of its operation.

The media in the MC were able to interview and seek comment from the full range of visitors at several spots in the MC. The CEC decided the MC should not to be used as a venue for non-election announcements and media conferences. This did not preclude candidates and political parties from holding interviews with and providing information to the media.

LOCATION

CEC officials had expressed their will to set a Media Center that projects a different view of Palestine from the one that focuses in the destruction of the Muqata, the construction of the wall or the fights following the second Intifada. Therefore we planned a modern Media Center.

Some relevant media (EBU, CNN and BBC, among them) had expressed their will to broadcast live from the Media Center. Broadcasting live implied a number of requisites, particularly the need to reach satellite antennas from the broadcasting vehicles and the organization of a pool of technicians from the various agencies in order for them to set up of a common TV signal and, thus, avoid a jam at the conference room.

The security issue did not affect, in principle, the scouting of the Media Center premises. Although minimum requirements were, of course, met, this was not a major issue in the planning of the operation. We visited a number of locations that had been previously identified by the CEC staff (see below for description). After quite comprehensive scouting work we identified the most suitable premises at the Ramallah Cultural Palace (RCP).

The following information was deemed to assist the team in identifying the challenge we were facing with regards to the needs.

- Conference Room that can host at least 500 journalists, dignitaries and other attendants;
- Working area for around 50-100 journalists where they could connect their lap tops or use of internet connected CEC desk tops;
- Office space for the Media Center Manager for operational purposes;
- Parking area adjacent to the Center where broadcasting vehicles can reach a satellite antenna. Parking space for other attendants' vehicles would also be an asset;
- Sufficient emergency exit gates to cope with large numbers of attendants;
- Sufficient power capacity to serve the several electronic devices that needed to be powered;
- Sufficient network/internet ports to serve the PCs;

- Telephone lines for the CEC staff members; and
- Adequate heating of the premises.

While the above mentioned were the essential requirements for a smooth operation, we also recommended the following:

- A VIP lounge;
- Translation booths;
- A reception area; and
- A power back up (generator)

Out of several locations we considered the Ramallah Culture Palace to be the most suitable. (It belongs to the municipality of Ramallah although its management lies under the UN.)

CULTURAL CENTER OF RAMALLAH

Ground floor
- Reception area. Large foyer that can host inauguration ceremonies and be used as waiting areas.
- Conference room. The theatre has a capacity of 700 people. It also has several spots where one can place cameras, sound/light management desk, 4 main emergency exits (+2 more in the stage area).
- Meeting Room (used as cafeteria).
- 3 VIP lounges with separate entrance.

1st floor
- 2x working space (some 100 m2) to be used as press rooms. Enough power plugs. It will require the installation of network lines and telephone lines. Wireless connection available (although it has little capacity). Direct access to parking lots.
- Office space (used as Ops Room).
- Translation booths x7 (rented to TV channels directly through the Cultural Center management staff).
- Office space with direct sight to the auditorium (rented to TV channels directly through the Cultural Center management staff).

Basement
- Working space (some 200m2). Repair work needed as well as network/internet and telephone connections (it was not used at all).

Roof
- Flat surface that can be used for live shot chronicles, although access will need control.

Note: No land lines available other than to service the internet system and very poor cell phone coverage.

4

OPERATION

The time-frame we considered for operating the Media Center was from Tuesday, January 4, 2005 through Tuesday January 11, 2005. These days were intended for: 1 day mounting; 1 day rehearsal; 3 operation days; 1 day dismantling. We found the number of days a bit tight. One extra day for rehearsal and possibly one more for dismantling would be advisable.

During the most relevant days (E-1, E, E+1) the Media Center was operating from 0800 to 2400, but the premises remained open for TV stations from the pool. The remaining days the Media Center operated on business hours (0800 to COB).

ACCREDITATION

At the time of planning the operation we presented a draft outline for the process of accreditation and made further suggestions in several meetings, however the decision made by the CEC did not take into account our advice. The long decision making policy in place at the CEC turned into a significant delay in the accreditation process. We recommend the decision making time-span be re-drawn.

Accrediting journalists and other stakeholders was, in principle, assigned to the Ministry of Information. This press card allowed them free exercise of their professional activities as well as access to polling stations. However, due to the large number of journalists expected (see above comment), and seeking not to stretch the space, the CEC decided to set a second accreditation system that gave journalist access to the premises at the MC in addition to the Muqata polling center. They thought it to be a good opportunity to build up a database with contact information from the most relevant local and international media for future operations. However, they did not take into account, contrary to our advice, the fact that many of the journalists accredited by such a process will not give coverage to future election processes in Palestine.

One of the problems was the short time-frame. Thanks to the accreditation personnel the task was carried out relatively successfully. In the future, we recommend better preparation and a longer time-frame in order to avoid chaos at the time of delivering the accreditation cards to the media representatives.

The fact that there were no grounds to allocate the pertinent accreditation to specific media representatives led us to a first-come-first-served policy when accrediting journalists. We recommend that a clear policy be drawn on this issue so that the most relevant media are represented in this accreditation process. This will also allow for some control over the very identity of the journalists accredited.

The fact that the international media needed to be accredited at least three times (Israel, PNA's Ministry of Information and CEC) in order to cover the elections caused confusion. A more concise and professional accreditation process should be implemented next time.

ACCREDITED GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS

A broad range of organizations, groups and individuals were eligible for accreditation needed to visit the MC. These included:

- Local Media;
- International Media;
- Television Networks;
- Local Observers;
- International Observers;
- Political Party Representatives;
- Candidates and their Representatives;
- Diplomatic Representatives and embassy staff;
- Palestinian Government senior officials;
- Non-Government Organizations; and
- Other VIPs as approved by the CEC.

However, due to the rush and confusion surrounding the process we cannot define in an accurate way the profile of all of the accredited journalist at this stage. Actual accreditation numbers were around 904.

SECURITY

While no relevant security concerns were identified, we set up a security system to control access to the premises and to direct traffic in the nearby area. Local police officers were responsible for providing security and directing the traffic outside the building.

The Media Center itself had a reduced team of security guards mostly to control crowds. The MC needed additional personnel to cope with the large numbers of expected attendants and long operation hours. They all belong to the Municipality but have no specific training. In future operations we recommend hiring a professional advisor to train security personnel.

Private security companies and cooperation with the Ministry of Interior were not considered by CEC officials despite our advice. Because the operation went rather smoothly, we did not have to face any major security problems.

EQUIPMENT AND CABLING

Those media organizations with specific requirements for broadcasting were invited to discuss their requirements well ahead of time. We estimated that the following was needed (either procured or rented):

Press Room:

- 20 PCs for the press room;
- 30 additional computer ports;
- 1 high-speed high capacity printers;
- 1 photocopier machine;
- 4 TV monitors;
- 1 satellite dish;
- 4 satellite receivers; and
- office furniture (50 desks, 50 chairs, 4 shelves, 1info board etc.).

Main Press Conference Room:

- 2 high performance multimedia projectors;
- 4 wireless microphones (provided by RCP);
- 2 high-performance long-reach microphone for the stage;
- 1 laptop PC;
- 2 desks;
- 1 lectern;
- 11 chairs (7x Commissioners 3x CEO, Spokesperson and Chief of Media Department);
- 6 banners (7x1,5 mt.);
- 2 banners for the desks;
- 1 banner for the lectern; and
- simultaneous translation boot and equipment (English-Arabic / Arabic-English)

In order to avoid possible jams of cameramen near the auditorium we worked out a plan by which a pool of TV operators was set. This TV pool would share the signal with the rest of the media free of charge. It worked very well and we recommend that the same process be implemented should there be a similar operation.

The same system was put in place for still cameras. Although we had no complaints from the media, we believe this not to be so disruptive in a crowded MC and thus have some reservations in recommending it again. The auditorium looked empty during many of the press conferences. In addition, it turned very difficult trying to deal with some journalists who were trying to skulk cameras into the auditorium or simply arguing they would not make use of their cameras inside. We assess this situation as very difficult to control.

Secondary Conference Room

This venue was not used in the end but was very useful for TV editors.

- 2 wireless microphones (the same that the ones used for the main Press conference room);
- 60 chairs;
- 1 lectern; and
- 2 Palestinian flags with poles.

VIP lounge
- 3 sofa sets;
- 3 coffee tables;
- 3 dust bins;
- 9 frames;
- 1 gas heater; and
- 6 ashtrays.

Media Center Manager Office. (Ops Room)
- 13 PCs;
- 1 printer;
- 1 mini server;
- 1 photocopy machine;
- office furniture;
- 20 hand held radio communication equipment; and
- 2 dust bins.

Foyer
- 8 TV platforms;
- 1 screen (reverse projection);
- 1 multimedia projector (reverse projector);
- 2 plasma screens;
- 6 dust bins;
- 4 tables for setting information desks;
- 1 brochure display furniture;
- 8 chairs; and
- crowd control poles.

Entrance
- 2 banners (4x1,5 mt.); and
- blue carpet.

CATERING

A catering facility and eating area was established and provided by the own RCP staff. Quality and cost were appreciated by all guests. They commended the excellence of service.

STAFFING

Overall staffing levels in terms of the management and operation of the MC were satisfactory. This applied to all aspects of the operation including management, IT, maintenance, cleaning, etc.

Approximately 57 nationals were employed to assist with the operation of the MC

- 3 IT expert for the help desk;
- 25 Hostesses (volunteers);
- Security guards (16 during the day / 2 at night);
- 4 VIP liaisons (hostesses);
- 4 Interpreters for simultaneous translation;
- Catering (provided by the manager of RCP);
- 1 Graphic designer;
- Web designing company (outsourced);
- 4 Work loaders;
- 1 Sound technician (provided by the RCP and part of the contract details); and
- 1 Light technician (provided by the RCP and part of the contract details)

In a next operation, training programs should be anticipated in such a way that additional staff can find their place easily and quickly and can operate independently. (i.e. training for the hostesses, training for the accreditation team, training for those in charge of the VIPs, and so on).

MANAGEMENT

It is highly recommended to bring on board a single head manager, to which every section (accreditation, VIPs, hostesses in the theater, etc) would report during planned regular meetings. Sharing information is crucial in such a tight time-frame and stressful operation. Let's hope that Rola Sirhan is available to take this responsibility next time, because she has done a great job.

PRESS CONFERENCES/ELECTION UPDATE BRIEFINGS

The Media Center should be better prepared and be more informative, since the media are expecting updates for the CEC. If the CEC does not feed them, they will make their own news.

HOURS OF OPERATION

Some media expressed their will to continue broadcasting live until 2:00 a.m. on e+2. For the next event it is recommended that, while the MC will be "open" the only support available should be IT help and a night shift Media Center Manager.

Things that worked well:
- Media Center Coordinator: She performed in an outstanding fashion. Was able to catch up with the ongoing planning in a record time-frame. If another operation of the kind should be carried out, she would be a great asset to the team;

- Assistant to MCC: He was very up to the daunting task we faced in terms of equipment and IT / Media technology;
- Volunteers: They were simply awesome and gave a fresh air touch to the Media Center;
- Catering: Perhaps the best idea ever in a Media Center. It was outstanding and help the team to stay together and within the premises;
- Technicians at MC: Always available and ready to react within short notice;
- IT help desk: Always available and ready to react within short notice;
- Web-design Company: Extremely efficient and reliable;
- Accreditation Officer: She really did her best to cope with the daunting task of accrediting over 1000 journalists in a four days period;
- Khader;
- IT department in CEC; and
- TV camera pool.

Things that need improvement
- Leadership at CEC: Must prioritize, delegate, and conduct structured meetings. The CEC senior staff, including the chairman, gave often the impression of improvising, not following the announced plans. Might have been disconcerting for the media;
- Clear definition of everybody's area of responsibility: to avoid confusion, duplication of efforts and frustration;
- Administration and procurement: We were without a place to work for over 10 days. They took way too long to sign the contract with the RCP. Wasted time and energies from the team that could have been better used in other matters;
- Decision making process: The process should be significantly shorter in order to avoid missing deadlines. The CEC gave the impression there were many other stakeholders playing in their area of responsibility and thus is not as independent as it pretends;
- Last minute changes: While it is everybody's job to be ready for a change, these should be kept, if at all possible, to a minimum. Whimsical changes should be avoided. (we refer to last minute changes in the stage lay-out which needed adjustment of mics, light etc. They just did not think about it when deciding in the last minute to do the changes.);
- Communication at RCP: Cell phone coverage was non-existent in most of the areas of the RCP. When there was coverage, it was very weak. No land lines were available. Not every member of the team had a hand held radio. For the next operation we would advise cooperation with a local provider to install an additional antenna;
- Information flow at CEC;
- VIP liaison office: Simply did not work well from any point of view;
- Results: We lost momentum when announcing the results. Abu Mazen, Bargoutti, Bush etc... congratulated the winner before we actually gave any preliminary results. We should take this into account for future operations. It is still a mystery

why the results were not displayed on the screens while it was technically possible and why they were announced so late the next day;

- Information management: The overwhelming plan for information coming from Data Entry Center was misused (if at all used). It was like providing CEC with a Ferrari and then they decide to use a rusty bike;
- Photographer's pool: Very difficult to prevent them from entering the auditorium with their cameras;
- Stand-alone mics: It worked only because there were not so many journalists. Otherwise, the queues would have been too long;
- Production of banners: A personal nightmare. See comments below; and
- Accreditation: Particularly bearing in mind the short time-frame we had to deal with it. In the end it was done, but not in time, and only due to the effort of the accreditation personnel. The database may very much change from one mission to another. As mentioned above, CEC did not take our advice into consideration.

COMMENTS ON IT

The company (BCI) that provided the help desk facility within the MC did a very good job; they always had staff present, and technically were very competent. After some communication problems at the beginning between CEC IT and BCI everything worked out very well.

COMMENTS ON CATERING

Possibly the best idea ever; not only did it delivered a great service but also helped to keep the team available at a permanent basis.

COMMENTS OF RCP Management

Basil Ayish (RCP manager) was very supportive and cooperative in all matters. He was a helping hand and great problem solver. This made both the construction and operation of the MC much easier.

COMMENTS ON INTERPRETERS

The contracted company could not provide us with manpower due to the fact that we were late in contracting services. In future operations we recommend this be taken care of well in advance. In the end we had to look for interpreters on our own. They did a good job, but, apart from a couple of them, they were not professional, which you could tell by their translation performance.

COMMENTS ON PRESS KIT

While a very useful tool for any foreigner coming to Palestine, it took a great deal of time and effort to get it printed and distributed. Maxim Sansour's (UNDP consultant to the

CEC) abilities could have been better used in other important matters although his work needs true commendation.

MEDIA CENTER IN GAZA

Little can be said on the Gaza operation since we had to focus our attention on Ramallah's Media Center. We could only make it to Gaza two days before the elections, which we consider extremely tight and useless to rearrange what had already been done.

Given these circumstances, we were only able to plan and assist the team in Gaza by telephone or e-mail, which is not ideal given the poor communication circumstances.
At peak time in the Media Center, we could not get hold of the staff in Gaza due to poor communication facilities.

Despite the above mentioned circumstances, the Gaza Media Center was very good, and every technical device was appropriate. Overall, more than 50 journalists and reporters were using the facilities on a daily basis and more than 200 on Election Day.

The staff in Gaza did a great job in helping them reach the information about the presidential elections 2005 despite the difficulties they encountered.

The Media Center was also used by some international observers, and many reporters did their live shot chronicles from Gaza's Media Center. Al-Jazeera, Al Arabia, and Abu Dubi TVs made live broadcast from there and held live TV interviews.

The main problem was the connection between Gaza and Ramallah Media Centers. For example, they has to ask for each press release. Had they not asked, they would not have received them. Staff in Ramallah frequently forgot about informing them on press briefing schedules update.

Most of journalists complimented the Media Center and thanked the staff there. They stressed the strong ability to conduct such an operation in Gaza, given the circumstances, and the kind service they received.

Location and Staff

The Media Center was set up on the second floor in the Grand Palace Hotel, Gaza. Six members of the CEC Gaza section were operating the Media Center.

Equipment and Cabling
- 5 PCs;
- 15 ports;
- 4 TV monitors;
- 1 satellite dish;
- 100 chairs;
- 20 tables;

- 4 banners;
- 1 high performance multimedia projector; and
- 1 microphone

Improvements

Since we were not present during the operation we can only comment on certain facts. Communication during the operation was certainly the weakest point which needs to be improved for the next elections.

APPENDIX B:

The Central Elections Commission

Media Relations Strategy: Draft Outline

OVERALL OBJECTIVES

The CEC's media relations strategy will aim to:

1. Communicate through local and international media the importance of the Palestinian presidential elections and the fact that they are being held through a democratic, fair and transparent process.

2. Secure the most comprehensive and orderly fair coverage of the presidential elections possible.

3. Use the election coverage to highlight core Palestinian issues and project a positive image of Palestine and Palestinian society.

MEDIA RELATIONS STRATAGY COMPONENTS

The CEC media relations strategy will include the following components:

1. The CEC Website

The English language version of the CEC website needs to be revamped to include:

- Regularly updated press releases translated from Arabic.

- A document on the principles of fair media coverage of election campaigns.

- A link to a CEC media relations section that includes:
  - List of services the CEC will be providing to local and international media representatives. E.g. media center.
  - A schedule of media related events such as press conferences.
  - A schedule of photo opportunities such as candidates' voting locations.
  - A list of important contacts information.
  - A digital downloadable version of the Press Kit.

2. Mass Emails

Press releases, press conferences, schedules updates etc. will be communicated to all media representatives on the CEC media database through mass emails.

3. SMS Messaging

A few days prior to Election Day news alerts and updates will be communicated to media representatives through SMS messaging.

4. Media Center and press conference facilities

The CEC media section will secure a properly equipped media center to function as the media headquarters. A press conference location should ideally be located in the same building or close by.

5. CEC Media Spokesperson

While key election news such as election policy announcements and election results will undoubtedly be delivered by senior CEC staff, a CEC Media Spokesperson or Media Liaison Officer should be appointed.

Doing so would ensure that media representatives have access to a CEC representative on constant basis while at the same time protecting the sources of statements coming out of the CEC.

A Media Liaison Officer would also be important to inform and accompany journalists working on in depth stories of the elections, such as the work of the CEC.

The ideal candidate for this task would be media savvy, well acquainted with election principles/CEC procedures and fluent in several languages.

6. Press Kits

The following materials should be included in the press kit and assist in enhancing the Website content of the CEC:

a. Background Package

- Information on history of Palestine.
- Palestinian election history.
- The role of the CEC.

- The 2005 presidential election process, rules and regulations.
- Issue Fact Sheets: The Wall, Israeli colonies, East Jerusalem, Check Points the two state solutions.
- Palestinian governance initiatives.

b. 2005 Presidential Candidates Package

- Names, district, party and photos.
- Campaign platform: Party and candidate.
- Contact information of campaign managers and spokespeople.
- Voting location and time.

c. Graphic Maps

- Graphic map of all districts highlighting the wall
- Graphic information on media facilities.

d. Schedule of Key Events and Photo/Footage Opportunities

e. FAQs: A comprehensive list of questions and answers on elections related matters.

f. Contact information of independent local election/political experts and commentators (E.g. below)

- Governance Organizations MIFTAH, AMAN etc.
- Local voter surveying/polling organizations.
- Local media groups.
- Arab American academics/political commentators.

g. Digital version of all the above on CD-Rom. In addition to:

- Feature articles. E.g. on voter education activities.
- Photo Stories.

h. Copy of this *Week in Palestine.*

It's likely that the magazine would have articles on the election in its January issue. It also has information on hotels, restaurants, cultural events and maps of major cities.

7. Press Networking/Social Events

A social gathering/dinner will be organized in a local hall to introduce media representatives to CEC officials, to present Election and photo-op schedules, to outline codes of conduct and to hand out press kits.

This would also be an opportunity to allow reporters to mingle with selected local personalities that media might want to interview.

8. Elections Hot Line

The CEC's call center staff should be trained to respond to media queries or direct media to adequate CEC personnel.

APPENDIX C:

CENTER FOR TRANSITIONAL and
POST-CONFLICT GOVERNANCE

GENERAL VOTER EDUCATION PLAN FOR THE PALESTINIAN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ELECTION (PLC)
JANUARY 2005

SUMMARY

In the context of such an important event as the 2005 legislative election for the Palestinian National Authority, the CEC is expected to be active in the preparation and motivation of the citizens. It will provide them with conventional information on the casting of the ballot. However, in its capacity as an independent institution, the CEC could play a more decisive role in organizing a national debate on the stakes of the parliamentary election at this time of the Palestine history.

This national debate is conducted through public discussion sessions in the 16 districts under the supervision of the district electoral offices (DEO), with the collaboration of all civic society organizations interested in encouraging the say of the Palestinian citizens in the profiling of their near future.

The CEC takes the lead on this nation-wide operation in consultation with some institutions (research centers, universities, specialized NGOs). It identifies and selects the topics that will be discussed, develops the material and program to train the facilitators who will guide the discussion sessions. Some of the recommendations collected from the citizens' discussions are publicized on the CEC website in order to inform on the evolution of the debate in the various parts of Palestine. Some others can be converted into electoral messages by the Awareness and Education (A&E) Section.

On the other hand, the CEC will develop its information program according to the electoral calendar while taking full advantage of the political events that may take place during the period up to the legislative election.

CONTEXT

The presidential election was called on very short notice in order to comply with the Basic Law requirements which calls for the filling of the vacuum at the presidency of the PNA within 60 days. Considering that the organization did its best to facilitate the exercise of their right to vote in registering potential voters, that the non-registered voters were allowed to vote and that an extension of the polling hours was announced to permit late voters to cast their ballots, a higher turn-out was expected.

This even more so when taken into account the aspirations for change of the population, its fatigue of the hardship they have struggled for a half a century, and the increasing deterioration of the economy, all factors that would justify a massive vote on Election Day. Considering that close to 40% of the voters did not bother to go and vote for the PNA president, a strategy has to be thought of in order to motivate the Palestinians to go to the polls and elect their representatives in the parliament.

In preparation for the next voter education (VE) campaign, close attention has to be paid to the population's perception of the Palestinian Legislative Council. From what could be caught in this short mission, Palestinians are quite deceived by their local institutions and ask for reforms. Such reforms should start with the review of the electoral law, specially the dispositions ruling the criteria and requirements to stand as a candidate, the free participation of political parties and independent candidates and the conditions of winning the election. The electoral system should ensure a direct link between the Member of Parliament and his constituency in a way to develop accountability of elected leaders to the citizens they represent. All steps should be taken that enhance the confidence of the Palestinians in the electoral system and its openness and adaptability to new situations created by the evolving political landscape.

On the VE side, the campaign for the May 2005 legislative election should take advantage of the two rounds of municipal elections planned for February and April to keep warm the electoral climate. The aspirations for change expressed in the wake of the presidential election will be linked to the nature and objective of the PLC. The mandate of the CEC campaign cannot focus just on technical aspects of the election; it should explain the responsibility of the parliament in the law-making process that will shape the nation's immediate future as well as the responsibility of the citizens in the choice and performance of this parliament. It will thus insist on the accountability of the members of the PLC to the citizens, a factor that should increase the confidence of the voters in the elected institutions.

OBJECTIVES

1) Contribute channel of the popular pressure on the PNA to achieve the important reforms (starting with the Electoral Law) the Palestinians are counting on in order to improve their actual life and future;

2) Motivate the electorate in explaining the importance of an elected parliament in a democratic presidential system. This point should extend to the role of the parliament members as representatives of their constituencies and in the

development of a body of laws that address the major problems of the population;

3) Explain the electoral system. The outcome of the election is much dependant on the understanding and mastering of the rules of the election by the voters. The A&E Section will explain the process carried out by the CEC, insisting on the procedures aiming at instilling confidence and trust in the election management body;

4) Spread the electoral information to all citizens without discrimination. This might require some checks and tests prior to, and during the campaign to ensure that the messages reach all population centers and fulfill the information needs of the voters; and

5) Pay special attention to special groups, for example, design some posters to encourage female participation as candidates as well as voters while keeping the message universal, meaning addressing both men and women.

STRATEGY

ADDITIONAL STAFFING OF THE A&E SECTION

It is highly recommended that A&E conduct a lessons-learned exercise with all Public Relations staff before launching a second voter education campaign. In the light of the conclusions of this assessment session, the A&E Section will review its human resources needs. It might want to bring in additional staff in view of the complexity and the length of the campaign that will require more district-focused attention in planning and implementation. The following positions are to be considered as minimal for a sustained and effective voter education work:

- A HQ liaison officer in charge of direct relations with the 16 district Public Relations officers; and
- An assistant to each PRO to organize local activities with citizens in different population centers.

TOOLS

In a long-term campaign, the organizers are well advised to develop a multi-step and multi-tool program. This program should cover a broad range of topics related to the electoral event, and avoid boring repetition that ends up losing the public's interest.

The tools are mainly two-fold: educational and promotional. An educational component, the roundtable is suggested as the best organized activity, because it can be carried out at different times and places and can involve many segments of the society. The roundtable or discussion forum uses the proximity approach by giving voice directly to the citizens where they are.

The promotional component includes all cultural products aimed at creating a supportive environment to the discussion sessions and involves as much as possible local artists in the design of the different items.

COLLABORATION

The proximity approach should be the angle privileged in the educational aspect of the campaign. Broad and open discussions are selected as the main tool. It must be ensured that all citizens are provided the opportunity to voice and share their opinions and visions regarding reforms needed for a stronger democracy. This methodology shows the population that the CEC not only cares about fulfilling its obligation to inform on the election but takes the lead on involving the citizens in the construction of their history. If any electoral management body is firstly responsible for the voter information, it can also participate actively in the development of broader programs aimed at instilling democratic values and better anticipate some changes within a society.

Some roundtables can be organized directly by the district public officer but they can also be convened and conducted by civic society organizations, among them, professional associations, community organizations, religious and cultural groups, women and youth organizations, learning institution and so on. All of those organizations have an interest in instructing their adherents and audiences on the social, political and economic benefits expected from an elected representative.

EDUCATIONAL COMPONENT

The next A&E legislative campaign will require a comprehensive explanation and interactive activities, considering its role in the development of positive attitudes towards legal reforms and peaceful means to advance the Palestinian cause as well as informing the electorate on technicalities of the vote.

The election of the 2005 Palestinian Legislative Council is more than another step in the electoral calendar pursuant the constitution. The members of the new PLC will share with the president the responsibility of taking strong decisions to implement the program they have promised to the voters. Such important agenda items as democratization of the institutions, fight against corruption and lawlessness, balance between nationalist sentiments and peace settlement of the conflict, are too important to be (and should not if the legislators wish full support from the people) decided upon by a group of persons even when empowered by a fair and free election. Since democracy is as much about the citizens' participation as election of their representatives, the CEC would be well inspired to encourage the say of the Palestinian communities in the immediate priorities they feel should be addressed by their elected leaders.

A very simple way to do so is through the organization of roundtable discussions to which Palestinians are convened to express and share their views on feasible solutions to long-standing problems. Such discussion sessions offer all interested citizens the opportunity to exchange ideas on what they wish for their immediate future, what is feasible and who are those most capable to achieve it. On the reverse side, the discussions can serve to inform the political parties and candidates on the priorities identified by the electorate. This interactive activity represents an appropriate option for Palestinians not only to choose their representatives at the parliament but also to have a say in the ranking of the priorities they would like this elected parliament to work on.

Those sessions are supervised and conducted by the district Public Relations Officers in the population centers, in both rural and urban areas. Drafted by the A&E, the agenda permits discussion on few points but allows the expression of many ideas without discrimination. Discussions could turn around the following questions:

- Who would make a good parliamentarian (best candidate's profile)
- What measures should be taken to fight corruption (accountability)
- What should be accomplished at the end of this upcoming four-year mandate in terms of development (popular expectations)

Any civil society organization (universities and high schools, journalists, research centers, NGOs, political associations, religious and cultural groups and so on) is encouraged to connect with the CEC, ask for the discussion program and the training of its facilitators (if needed) and convene a discussion session with its members, adherents or constituencies in order to enrich the debate with specific inputs. For example, it would be interesting to hear from the Palestinian journalists what measures should be taken to secure the freedom of speech, or from the political factions how they would protect the freedom of dissention while ensuring law and order.

The benefits of the roundtables stay in the disclosing and the nation-wide sharing of the outcome and the citizens' opinions and recommendations on the PNA institutions reforms, starting with the PLC. A bottom-up channel has to be put in place from the community level to the district and then national level.

The benefits of linking closely with civil society organizations can be multiple for the CEC. If any electoral management body is firstly responsible for voter information, it can also participate actively in the development of broader programs aiming at instilling democratic values and anticipating some changes within a society.

PROMOTIONAL COMPONENT

In order to call attention to and give color to the conduct of the discussion sessions, the CEC will care for developing a full range of promotional products, starting with a slogan (for example) PALESTINIANS SPEAK OUT. This slogan can later be explained and translated into words, music and visual supports, meaning in messages, a jingle and posters. The choice is wide, the most important being that it reflects the cultural features of the society.

CULTURAL PRODUCTS

Palestinians should be encouraged to participate in developing electronic media products, sketches, cartoons, or posters, etc. The realization of each of those products could be attributed by way of contest to local creators and artists. This is a way to involve the artistic community (and hopefully the youth) in the national debate on the future of the Palestinian society.

This offers the possibility to local creators to supply input. Their ability to integrate external elements and components will ensure that the material reflects the needs, cultural trends and tastes of the population, while filling the needs of supplying useful information.

SPECIFIC TARGETS: WOMEN AND YOUTH

Although women performed well in the December municipal elections and January presidential election, they should be offered special encouragement to participate as candidates and voters. Great care will be taken to organize roundtables by and for women's organizations. Equal public space will be allowed to them to voice their needs and hopes, in urban and rural communities.

Another segment that should be involved in the renewal of the leading forces is the youth. Many youth stayed away from the January polls and instead protested against the ruling styles of the PNA leaders. As their parents, young Palestinians want improvements in the economic situation and need to be offered alternatives to the practices of political violence.

MEDIA COVERAGE

As usual, media will play an active role in echoing the messages drawn from the roundtables and launched by the A&E. Promotional messages disseminated by the A&E team will encourage the participation in the discussion sessions. Roundtables and media work together toward the same goals: bring well-informed citizens to the polls.

TIMETABLE

If the legislative election's date is maintained for July 17th, 2005, the A&E Section will have a 6 month period to mount and carry out its VE campaign. Two municipal rounds are planned for February and April and although they will not be organized by the CEC, they can provide some momentum for roundtable discussions. The launching of the operation could coincide with the conference on Palestine security, economic and political reforms, announced for March. Local public events will also serve as background to organize and conduct discussion sessions.

Those hot points on the road to the legislative election indicate that if the idea of open discussions is retained, the A&E should go back to its worktable without delay in order to develop the partnerships and the training program necessary to implement the VE program.
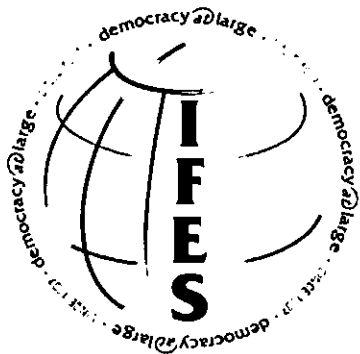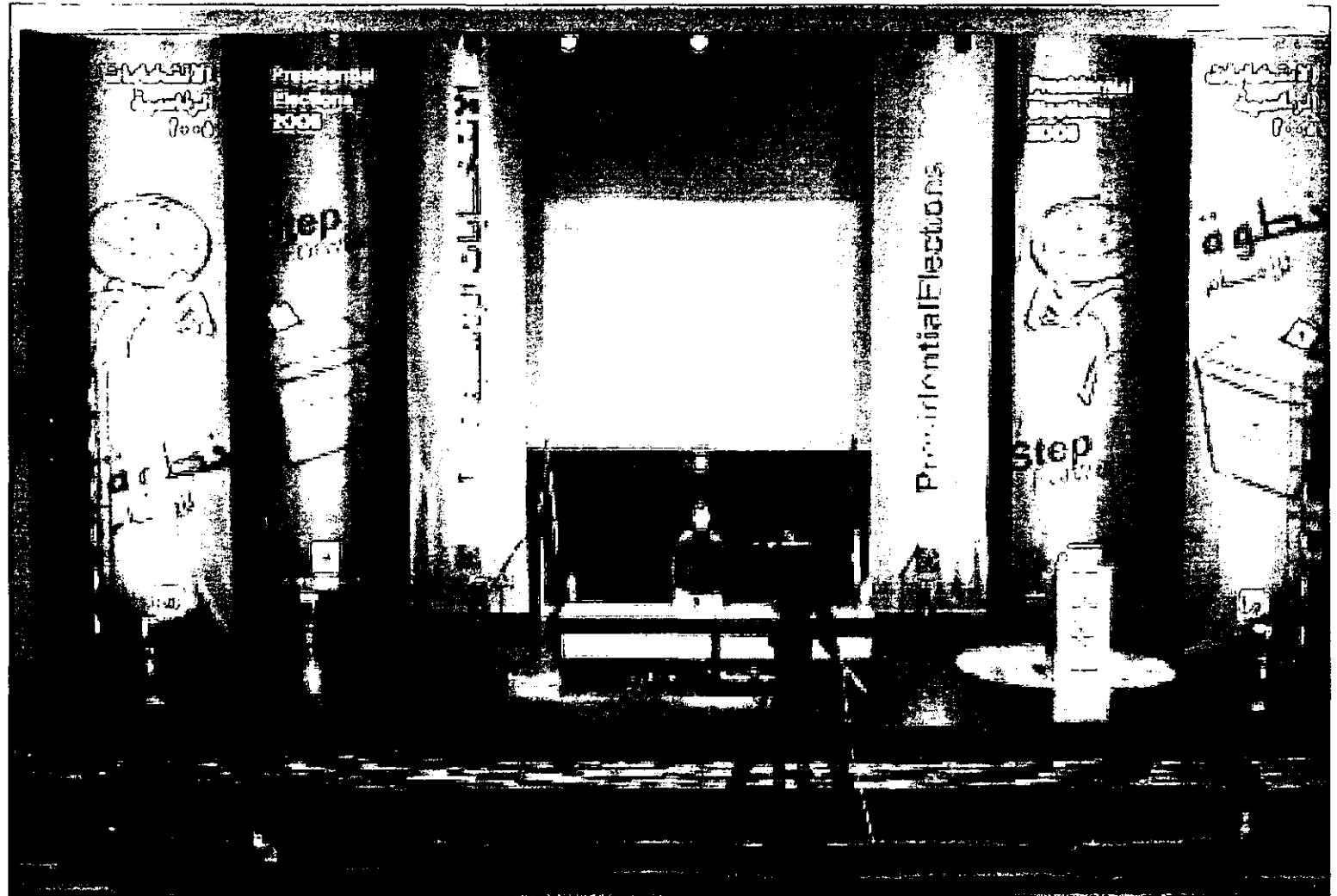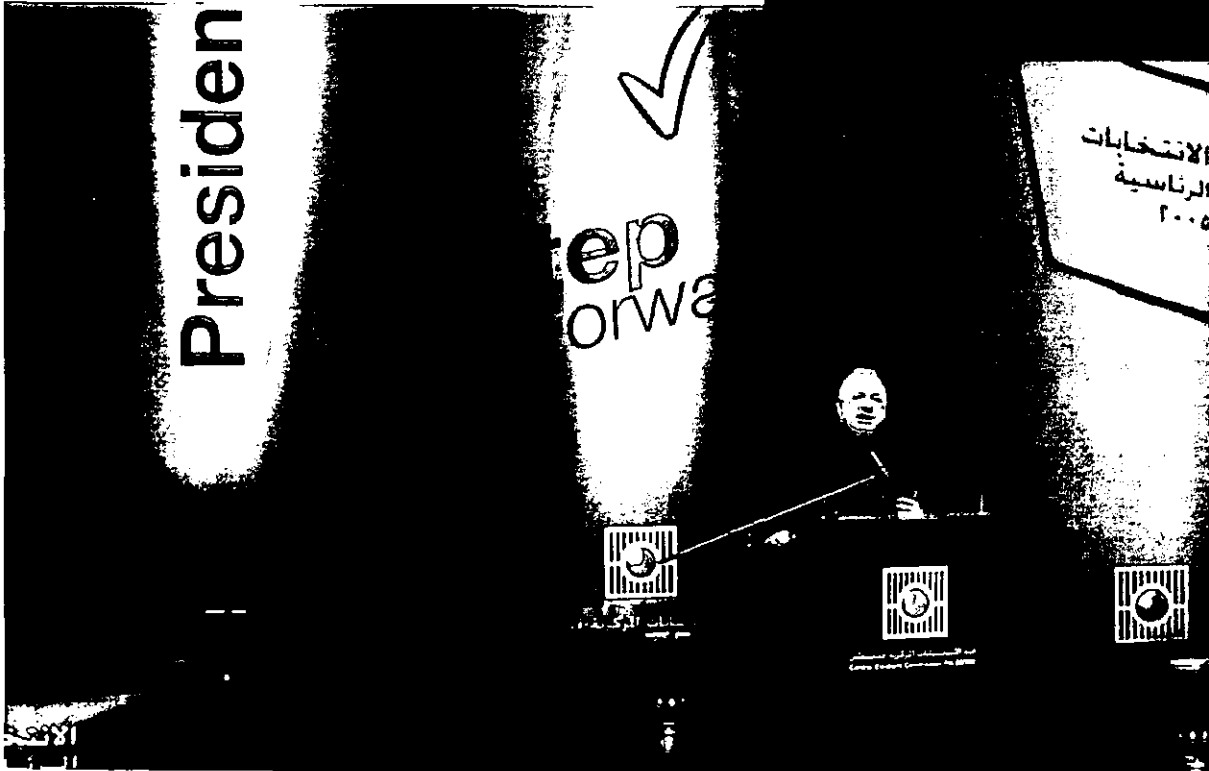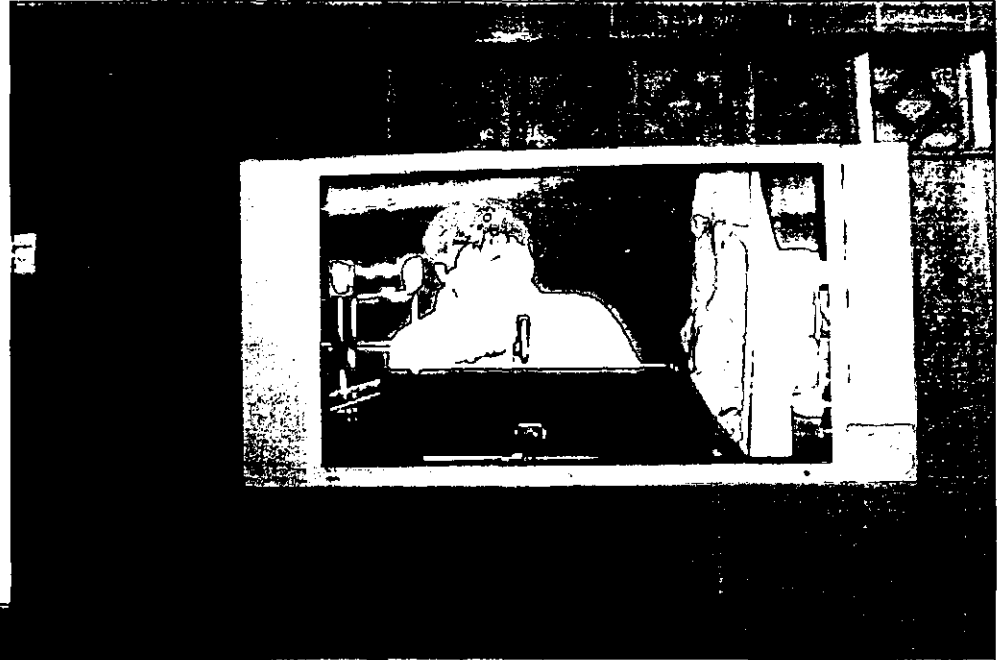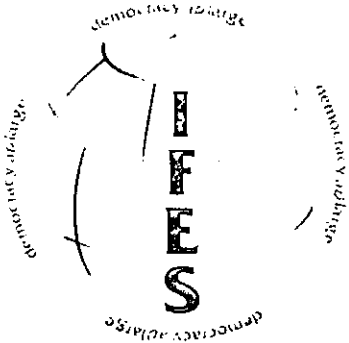
APPENDIX D

IFES –WEST BANK GAZA
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS 2005
MEDIA CENTER PHOTO PRESENTATION

Presiden

tep
orwa

الانتخابات
الرئاسية
٢٠٠٤

Credit - G. Azar

IFES

democracy at large

Media Center
Presidential Elections 2005

لجنة الانتخابات المركزية-فلسطين
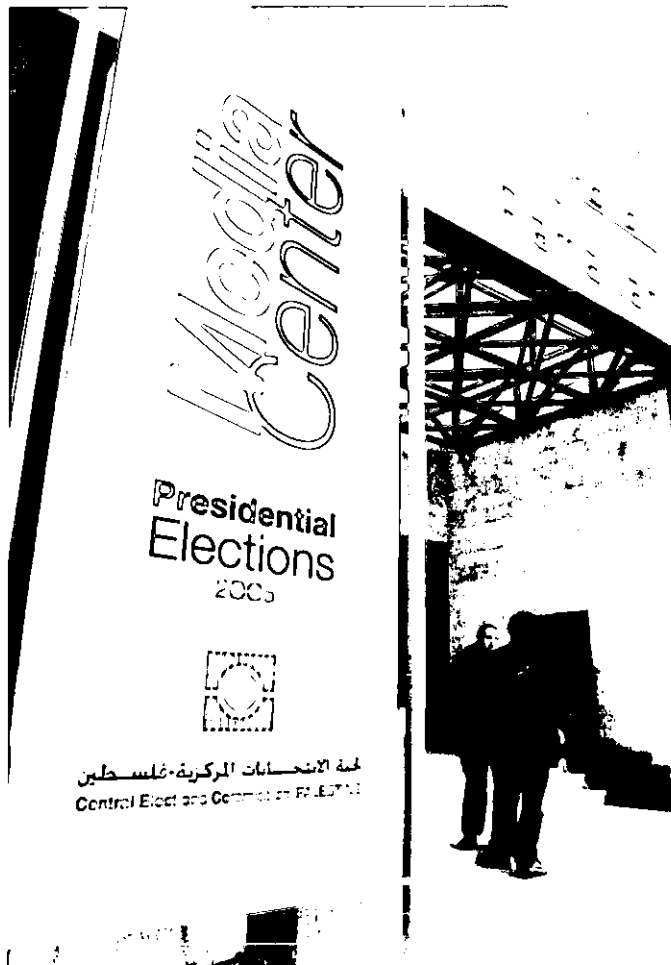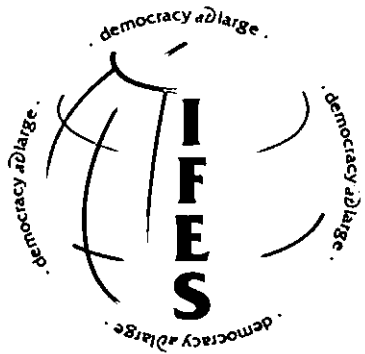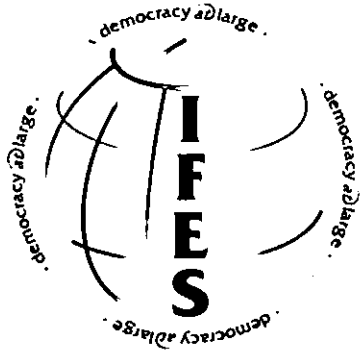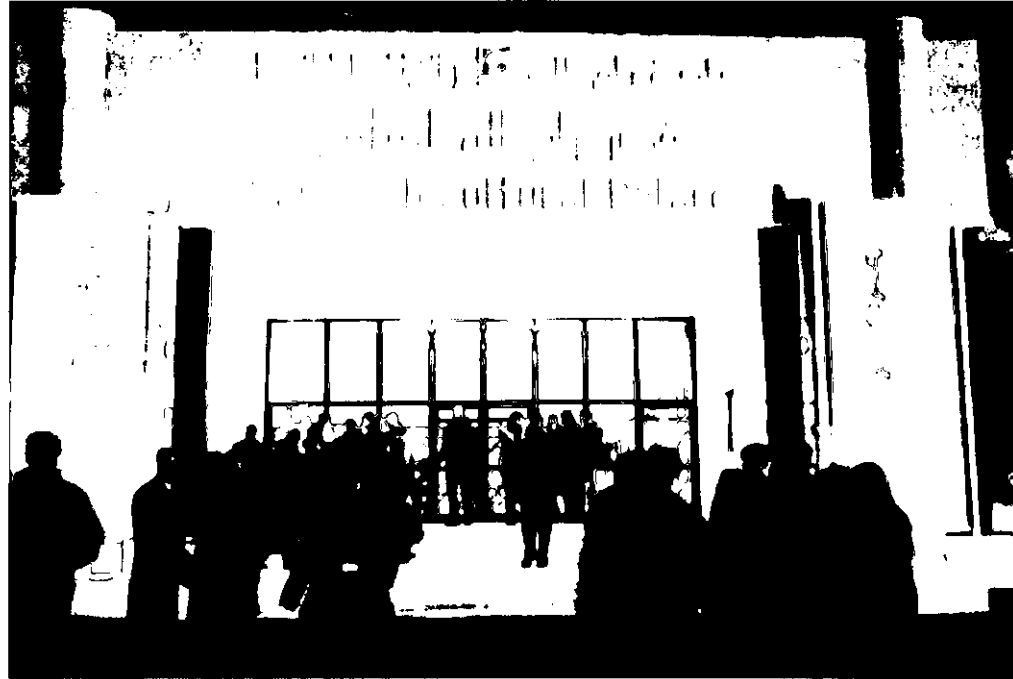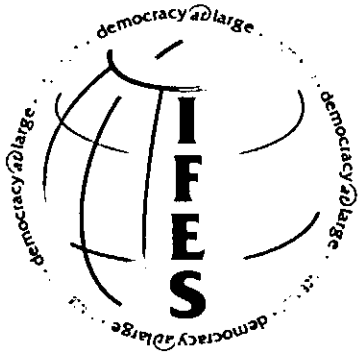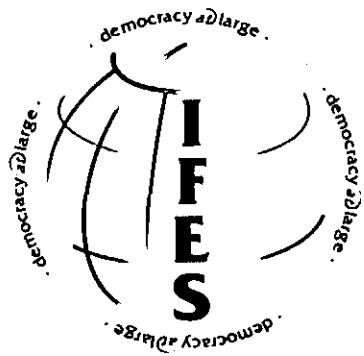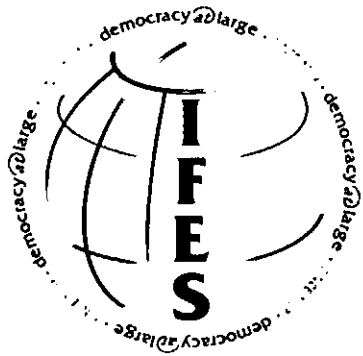Central Elections Commission Palestine

Credit - G. Azar

Credit - G. Azar

Credit - G. Azar

Credit - G.Azar

Credit - G. Azar