



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

International Election Monitors' Initial Impression Favorable

BAGHDAD, IRAQ, March 8, 2010 – Members of an international team witnessing the Iraqi elections say that Iraqi election officials deserve high praise for their management of the logistics of the Iraqi election and the design of the election processes.

“We think the Independent High Election Commission should be praised for its commitment to ballot integrity and a state-of-the-art reporting network,” said Doug Rowland, the head of the delegation and a former Member of the Canadian Parliament.

The team visited more than two dozen polling stations during Sunday’s vote; visited multiple sites in the special needs voting held late last week; and received extensive briefings from knowledgeable Iraqi citizens and representatives of the international community.

“All of us were impressed with the courage of the voters. In the face of nearly 50 explosions in the city of Baghdad, Iraqis of all ages and political affiliations went to the polls to vote. Their commitment to shape the future of Iraq is truly inspirational,” said former U.S. Congressman Jim Slattery.

“We found that the limited number of polling stations we were able to visit were properly staffed and equipped and followed proper protocols. We were troubled by recurring issues centered on valid voter registration rolls. It is our hope that these problems will be solved for future elections,” said Anthony Simpson, former Member of the European Union Parliament.

At the invitation of the Independent High Electoral Commission, the six-person team from the International Election Monitors Institute (IEMI) spent a week in the country observing both the March 7 Iraqi election, and the subsequent tabulation. The team is composed of six former legislators from Sweden, the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States. In addition to their direct experience of elections, all six have received special training in election observation. All are acting pro bono.

The team members are: the Honorable Per Gorton, Sweden; the Honorable Anthony Simpson, United Kingdom (both former Members of the European Parliament); the Honorable Paul DeVillers, Canada; the Honorable Jim Slattery, USA; the Honorable Scott Klug, USA; and team leader, Mr. Douglas Rowland, Canada, President Emeritus of the IEMI. In January 2006, Mr. Rowland led an international team which conducted a post-election analysis of the December 2005 Iraqi election processes.

The team focused its observation efforts on the operation of the Iraqi High Electoral Commission and other regulatory bodies rather than on polling station performance.

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“With such a small team, we have had to adopt a very narrow focus in order to make an effective contribution. We supplemented our visit with information we gathered by reaching out to Iraqi election observation organizations, political parties and civil society groups as well as representatives of the international community.”

The IEMI was formed in 2005 through the coming together of the United States Association of Former Members of Congress, the Former Members Association of the European Parliament and the Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians. The Institute, which has offices in Washington, Brussels and Ottawa, received its initial funding from the Canadian International Development Agency.

The team is in the process of completing a more detailed final report which will be completed within the week.

For more information, please contact:

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