

HOW TO DETECT POTENTIAL ELECTION IRREGULARITIES

The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs in the United States gives these guidelines to its observer teams. They can also be used as a guideline for journalists: *"Try to observe research and record the severity, frequency and pattern of any of the following issues and the number of voters influenced."*

Be alert for:

- **Unfair attempts to influence voters or election officials** through bribes, employment promises, threats, intimidation, systematic disruption of the election process, unbalanced media access;
- **Disenfranchisement of voters** through unreasonably restricting the registration process, unreasonably restricting candidate eligibility, failing to register voters, requiring unreasonable additional voter identification, systematic complication of the election process, incomplete distribution of election materials;
- **Fraud**, such as stealing ballots, stuffing ballots, destroying ballots, miscounting, providing misleading reports to the media, voting twice, trying to remove indelible ink;
- **Logistical problems** like insufficient ballots, ballots missing for certain parties, insufficient number of envelopes, ink that washes off, inadequate secrecy of the vote, missing officials, missing voter registry, no artificial lighting at the voting centre;
- **Civic education**: voters not seeming to have a reasonable understanding of their right to freely choose a candidate or how to express their choice. Also look out for administrators who do not have a reasonable understanding of their duties and how to execute them."
- **Police or military** hampering voters or favouring politicians or voters of a particular party.

Partly based on International Federation of Journalists ELECTION REPORTING HANDBOOK