**Referendum 2002**

Background

Musharraf came to power in a military coup on 12 October 1999. He initially referred to himself as "Chief Executive", before later removing President Rafiq Tarar from office and assuming the post himself. Musharraf claimed that holding a referendum was abiding by democratic laws, despite the constitution of Pakistan not containing a reference to electing Presidents by referendums.

A referendum on allowing Pervez Musharraf to continue as President for five years was held in Pakistan on 30 April 2002. The proposal was approved by 97.97% of voters. However, the referendum was boycotted by the opposition on the basis that it was unconstitutional. Although turnout was reported to be 56.1%,the opposition claimed it was between 5% and 7%.

The referendum was seen by many as a fake or fixed. Opposition parties including the Pakistan People’s Party and the Pakistan Muslim League referred to the decision of Musharraf to hold a referendum as inappropriate and urged citizens to boycott the vote. In response, the voting age was lowered from 21 to 18 and the number of polling stations significantly increased, whereas ID cards were not required for people to cast a vote.