

Forum: General Assembly

Issue: Ensuring free and fair elections

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Introduction

The simple phrase “free and fair elections” have always been controversial. History all around the world illustrate that the systematic implementation of free and fair elections have also been strenuously challenging. Even today, the UN is trying to get countries that are starting to open up on this path of free and fair elections. However, some countries are not even close to starting this path. This is purely a tragedy because having free and fair elections implemented in a country’s government system is the seed of democracy. It is the root cause for a country’s people’s contentment.

Thus the hard work and effort put into by the United Nations to resolve the issue of not having the freedom to vote. The United Nations is trying to grasp every chance of enabling people to vote; especially in the countries where it is the most possible and is newly exposed to this virtue.

Definition of Key Terms

Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

The IPU was established in 1889. It is an international organization consisted of parliaments from all over the world. The significance this organization has to this issue is the fact that it constructed the Declaration on Criteria for Free and Fair Elections. It also has cooperated with the United Nations on many agendas.

Declaration on Criteria for Free and Fair Elections

This is a text mentioned in the earlier definition that goes into detail about the backbone of free and fair elections. This also includes stressing the fact that every individual should have the right to in some way shape the government either through voting indirectly or directly. This text of adopted unanimously by the IPU on March 26, 1994 in Paris.

Direct Democracy

Citizens of a nation are enabled to 'directly' influence the passing of laws, presidential elections, etc.

Representative democracy

This differs from direct democracy. Citizens only get to elect representatives. These representatives then influence the passing of laws and other similar matters. Examples of countries with a representative democratic government could be the USA and Canada.

People's Action for Free and Fair Elections (PAFFREL)

PAFFREL is an independent organization formed in 1987. It aims to observe any unstable electoral processes to prevent fraud.

General Overview

Situations in the world on free and fair elections

There are or have been many cases in different countries that have to do with the attempts and successes in implementing a healthy and whole election. The UN has been involved with all of the ones listed below.

Zimbabwe

There is hope now for Zimbabwe's free and fair elections in 2011. However, it didn't always look this way. There were conflicts between the two opposing parties; Tsvangirai's Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (Zanu-PF). These conflicts were born from the "power-sharing" deal these two parties had in September 2008. In this month, Tsvangirai became prime minister and Mugabe was to chair the cabinet meetings. However this deal went wrong. The natural hatred between the parties rose constantly. Mugabe even started to call Tsvangirai offensive names. Worse yet, Zimbabwe was under horrible social and economic problems like the cholera epidemic and extreme inflation issue. All the hatred came before from the 2008 elections when a fluctuating/suspicious election results came out. 200 were killed, 5,000 abducted. To prevent any more bloodshed and ensure the safety of his supporters, Tsvangirai pulled out.

After this disaster and the tension, the two men agreed to talk since they were under extreme pressure from the international eye. In early 2009, Tsvangirai agreed to join a unity government with Mugabe as president. This coalition continues to survive and is the hope for next year's fair and free election. A lot of it depends on the constitution that is currently being crafted and will be done around the beginning of next year.



Caption #1: Tsvangirai (left); Mugabe (right)

Ukraine

The fraud elections of 2004 spark the most important event in the Ukraine after its 1991 independence. The two opposing candidates were Yuschenko (more leaning towards the West and the EU principles) and Yanukovych. Predictors inferred that Yuschenko had a great chance of winning. Suspiciously, Yuschenko fell ill, and the doctors suspected poisoning. The candidates tied for the first round and went on to the second round. Results from the second round dictated that Yanukovych has won the presidential election by two percent.

This caused uproar in the public. Protests were seen over all the famous square of the Ukraine. Thus the Orange Revolution began. A re-election was issued by the Ukraine Supreme Court and Yuschenko was appointed president. The first election after the tainted 2004 election was held on the 18th of January this year. Electoral advisors monitored this election and gave their thumbs-up for a “clean” election. Ukraine, so far, is on the beginning of the road of ensuring “free and fair elections”.



Caption #2: Viktor Yuschenko



Caption #3: Viktor Yanukovich

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
March 26, 1994	Declaration on Criteria for Free and Fair Elections was adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).
November 22, 2004	Ukrainian Orange Revolution

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

The United Nations has been affiliated with establishing free and fair elections in more than 45 countries. Some of these countries include Cambodia, Namibia, El Salvador, Eritrea, Mozambique, Nicaragua and South Africa. It also assisted these troubled countries with monitoring results and electoral counseling.

- Security Council Declares Support for Free, Fair presidential election in Lebanon; Calls for Withdrawal of Foreign Forces There, 9 February 2004 (**SC/8181**)

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