



December 24, 2016

## **Election Working Group**

### **Preliminary Statement on Narayanganj City Corporation Election Held on December 22, 2016**

#### **SUMMARY FINDINGS**

*Based on its Election Day observation, the Election Working Group (EWG) found the December 22, 2016, Narayanganj City Corporation Election to be mostly peaceful and credible. The EWG did not observe any incidents of violence or vote rigging, and found voter participation substantial amid multiple layers of tight security. In general, polling officials were neutral, voting was undertaken in an efficient and professional manner, and voters were able to cast their votes in an orderly manner. Due to the absence of malpractice and irregularities, EWG evaluates the Narayanganj City Corporation Election as the fairest election held under the Kazi Rakib Uddin Election Commission, and marks a transformation from the violence, vote rigging, and other electoral violations observed in other recently held elections in Bangladesh.*

#### **Methodology**

Out of 174 polling stations, EWG observed 31 polling stations (17.8%) covering 11 wards; these polling stations were selected using a random sampling technique from the complete list of polling stations prepared and gazetted by the Election Commission. Prior to Election Day, all 31 EWG observers received one full day of training, with many observers having previous experience in observation activities. EWG's Election Day observation activities were comprehensive, covering: (i) preparation and opening of the polling stations; (ii) voting operations and procedures; (iii) closing and counting; and (iv) voting environment inside the polling stations.

#### **Poll opening**

EWG found that all polling stations observed were equipped with necessary equipment and opened on time. In all observed polling stations, ballot boxes were opened in front of polling agents and observers to demonstrate that the boxes were empty, and in 93% of polling stations observed, people were seen standing in long queues to cast their vote.

#### **Voting operations**

Voting took place peacefully from poll opening to closing. In all polling stations observed, polling agents from both the major party candidates were present. No incident of ousting the agents or voters was recorded by EWG; also, no complaint about electoral irregularities was made by the candidates or his/her agents as recorded by EWG in the observed polling stations. Observers found that special attention was given to certain categories of voters, such as the aged, pregnant women, visually impaired,

and the disabled. Due to long queues, EWG observed a few voters walking away from voting with a plan to come back later. The voter turnouts as observed by EWG throughout the day were as follows:

10.00 am	01.00 pm	3.00 pm
24%	45%	56%

**Peaceful - no violence and irregularities**

EWG observers observed no violence or electoral violations in the observed polling stations; there was no intimidation of voters, ballot stuffing, attacks by miscreants, vote rigging etc. There was no disruption of voting by anyone in the polling stations observed.

**Closing and counting**

Counting started almost immediately after voting ended at the official time; in 96% of stations observed, presiding officers ensured the presence of polling agents and observers, and EWG found no unauthorized persons present in the counting room in the observed polling stations. All observers witnessed the security seals were fixed with the ballot boxes properly; however, three EWG observers were not allowed into the counting room.

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**ABOUT THE ELECTION WORKING GROUP**

The Election Working Group (EWG) is a non-partisan network of 27 leading civil society organizations in Bangladesh that was formed in 2006 with the shared goal of enhancing the transparency and accountability of elections and other democratic processes in Bangladesh. EWG is governed by a strict code of conduct to carry out neutral, comprehensive election observation throughout the country. This includes a scientific methodology of randomly sampling polling stations when deploying observers, and comprehensive training for all observers. Since its establishment, EWG has observed elections at the national, city corporation, and local levels, as well as conducting advocacy for further electoral reforms.