



## **The necessity of expanding the council of the commission and discussing its bill in parallel with the Elections bill, Al-Hayat Center**

A press release has been issued by Al-Hayat Center for Civil Society Development pointing important amendments to be reflected on the Independent Commission for Elections bill, including the necessity to represent the Jordanian Press Association, the Jordanian Bar Association and the Civil Society to the governing council of the commission, as well as, clearly stipulating the commission's jurisdiction in overseeing and administrating municipal councils' elections. Al-Hayat also pointed the importance of discussing the Elections bill, Municipal Elections bill and the Independent Commission for Elections bill in parallel by Parliament due to their high relevance and interdependency.

### **Statement by Al-Hayat Center on the Independent Commission for Elections**

Based on its national and international experience in the field of elections observation and democratic practices, as per its monitoring of the 2007 and 2010 parliamentary elections and 2011 municipal elections in Jordan, as well as its participation in observation missions to Sudan, Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco, Al-Hayat Center for Civil Society Development believes the establishment of an Independent Commission for Elections is an important step on the path to achieving political reform and ensure the integrity of the electoral processes and their outcomes, thus encouraging greater participation by the citizens. Nonetheless, several amendments should be considered to the bill presented by the government, in order to guarantee the absolute independence of the commission in fulfilling its duties.

Moreover, Al-Hayat Center believes in the importance of concurrently discussing the bills of Elections, Municipal Elections and the Independent Commission for Elections by the House due to their high relevance to and interdependency on each other, where the separate deliberations on these bills might result in vague, incoherent or conflicting legislations. Furthermore, a participatory approach needs to be adopted in consulting with civil society organizations, political parties and interested groups on their views regarding the three bills.

These amendments should include the following:

1. Expand the representation to the commission's council to nine members, while stating the exact criteria for their selection in such way not open for interpretations. By which article 6-b-1 would read as follows:  
*"6-b-1 For the purpose of article 6-a above, the Prime Minister is to submit for His Majesty's approval a list of names to serve as Commissioners on the Council constituted as following:*
  - a. *One member selected by the Cabinet;*
  - b. *One member selected by the Upper House of Parliament;*
  - c. *One member selected by the Judicial Council;*



- d. *Two members selected by the Lower House of Parliament, given they are not members of the Lower House;*
  - e. *One representative of civil society selected by the Lower House of Parliament;*
  - f. *One representative of the National Center for Human Rights selected by its Board of Trustees;*
  - g. *One representative of the Jordanian Bar Association selected by its Council;*
  - h. *One representative of the Jordanian Press Association selected by its Council;*
  - i. *Any of the selectees as above are to receive a majority vote of endorsement by the corresponding nominating entity.”*
2. The membership of the council of the commission should be for a term of six years, renewable only once.
  3. The Secretary General of the commission is to be appointed by a two-third majority vote of endorsement by the commission’s council.
  4. The resignation of any of the council members is to be endorsed by a two-third majority by the council and submitted for final approval by His Majesty the King through the Prime Minister. A substituting member is to be nominated by the entity that nominated the resigning member to be submitted for His Majesty’s approval through the Prime Minister, to serve the remaining term of the council.
  5. The commission should be empowered to suggest to the legislators amendments to the elections laws as it sees fit.
  6. The commission should hold the right to annul the candidacy of individuals if seen in breach of regulations, where such individuals should have the right to resort to the judicial to contest such a decision.
  7. Articles concerning local and international observers should be made clearer, where accreditation is to be the sole decision of the commission, while establishing their scope of work unambiguously.
  8. Article 13-a should be amended to allow three members of the commission’s council to request a meeting of the council.
  9. Article 16-b should be amended to allow the commission the right to recruit its staff from governmental and non-governmental entities on limited duration contracts, and not restrict its staffing to governmental reassignment.
  10. There needs to be article/articles with regards to the commission’s staff knowledge and training on international standards of electoral processes and observation as a requirement for commencement of work.
  11. Article 21-a should be amended to allow the commission to request additional/emergency funding if need arise, as well as allowing it the possibility to receive technical assistance from non-governmental organizations as per Jordanian legislations.
  12. There needs to be article/articles clearly stipulating the commission’s jurisdiction to oversee and administer the municipal elections.