



Iran 2017 Presidential and Municipal Elections Candidates' Agents - Guide to Election Day

Introduction

On May 19, 2017, Iranians will vote in presidential and municipal (city and village) council elections. The presidential election will be the 12th in the country's history, while city and village council elections will be held alongside the presidential vote. Municipal councils work with the Majlis (Parliament) and are tasked with electing mayors, determining local budgets, and other activities and affairs of their jurisdictions. The president is directly elected by Iranian citizens for a four-year term; presidents may not served more than two consecutive terms, or eight years total. If one presidential candidate does not receive 50%+1 of the vote, then the election will go to a second round to be held the following Friday, May 26, 2017.

Who is running in these elections?

Presidential election: Beginning on April 11 and lasting until April 15, presidential candidate hopefuls registered to run in the election. The Guardian Council then deliberated and vetted candidates, after which the Ministry of Interior (MoI) announced the shortlist of presidential candidates on April 20. The six presidential candidates are (in alphabetical order):

- Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf
- Mostafa Hashemitaba
- Eshaq Jahangiri
- Mostafa Mir-Salim
- Ebrahim Raisi
- Hassan Rouhani

Municipal elections: In March 2017, 287,000 Iranians registered over a week to run for municipal (city and village council) elections. There are 110,000 council positions across the country, and a parliament-run electoral committee announced approved candidacies on April 22, 2017.

Who can vote in these elections?

Iranian citizens must be at least **18 years of age** to vote on election day (date of birth May 19, 1999 or earlier). When showing up to a polling station, voters must present their *shenasnameh*. There is no formal voter registration process or voters list in Iran, and as such, voters may go to any polling station.

Who administers the elections?

There are two main bodies charged with managing specific aspects of the elections in Iran - the Guardian Council and the Ministry of Interior. Iran's constitution does not stipulate the formation of an independent election commission.

The Guardian Council: 12-member body manages presidential elections in Iran, including accepting and rejecting candidate applications, resolving electoral disputes, monitoring the conduct of the campaign and certifying the official election results.

The Guardian Council establishes Supervisory Committees that monitor the electoral process at varying levels, from a central level, provincial level, district level, and at the most granular level, the Guardian Council observers inside polling stations.

Ministry of Interior: Conducts election activities, logistics and implements electoral policy under the instruction and discretion of the Guardian Council. The Ministry of Interior is tasked with activities such as distributing manuals on the conduct of the election, printing ballot papers and archiving election documentation. While the Ministry of Interior is given authority over logistics and administration of the election, the Guardian Council can overrule them if necessary.

During the start of an electoral cycle, the Ministry of Interior establishes the Central Executive Elections Board (CEEB), which plans for MOI inspections and is responsible for the final tabulation of results. At the lower, county level, the farmandars set up their own executive election boards with separate electoral responsibilities.

Structure of Elections: There are a total of 31 provinces and 1057 districts for the 2017 elections. The number of polling stations will be determined closer to election day.

Party Pollwatching as a Practice

Why is serving as a candidate agent important?

In nearly all countries around the world, representatives of political parties or candidates observe the voting and counting processes inside polling stations on election day. Party pollwatchers, or candidates' agents, help to safeguard the integrity and credibility of the

conduct of the election and contribute to a transparent, genuine and effective election process. Candidates' agents can ensure that the election is fair and credible for their candidate and party, while also observing the conduct of polling officials and election authorities to determine whether proper procedures are followed. Party pollwatchers can expose and deter fraud from occurring, ensure the voting rights of their supporters are upheld, and submit election complaints and disputes to the electoral district committees or the Guardian Council.

As a candidate agent stationed inside the polling station, you are legally permitted to observe the entire polling process - from the set up and opening of the polling station (one hour prior to the start of voting) to the closing and counting of votes. You will ensure that the process follows the proper procedures, and that polling officials, other observers and voters conduct their duties correctly and uphold the integrity of the election. You will observe any violations in procedure, as well as any incidents that you believe could compromise the credibility of the election. Your mission is critical to ensuring that the election in Iran is fair and credible.

Accreditation for Candidate Agents

Candidates or candidate representatives must submit names for their election day polling station agents in a specific district or area five days before election day -- no later than 14 May 2017. The Supervisory Board will issue a card that you must bring to the polling station in order to legally observe. The Ministry of Interior's National Election Board will instruct candidate agents on which polling station they should observe inside on election day. On election day, polling officials or farmandar's representatives may instruct you to attach your credential to your clothing so it is visible throughout the day, and they will instruct you on a location where you can observe the process inside the polling station. Candidates' agents are permitted to observe election day processes inside polling stations, from the opening, voting, closing and counting processes. inside polling stations. If you are not permitted to do so, this represents a violation of the Law on the Presence of Candidate Agents in Polling Stations, 2000 in Iran.

Violations or incidents can be reported directly to polling officials on election day, though it is their discretion to include these in the official minutes from the polling station. In addition to this method, candidate agents can report issues to their candidate, who can then file an official complaint within two days through the Observatory boards or directly to the Guardian Council.

Serving as a Candidate Agent

As a candidate agent, your role will be to observe the entirety of election day process, from the set-up and openings of polling stations, the voting process, the closing of the polling station and the counting of ballots.

ELECTION DAY

Who is permitted inside the polling station?

- Farmandar's representatives (Head of the county)
- Polling officials (including a designated head and deputy head of the polling station)
- Guardian Council observers
- Polling station guards
- Interior Ministry Inspector
- Candidates' agents
- Voters

Who is NOT permitted inside the polling station?

- Armed individuals
- Voters who have already voted*

** It is important to note that voters are only permitted inside polling stations while they are voting. They are not permitted to remain inside the polling station after they have cast their ballot.*

Role of Polling Station Guards - The location of where guards are placed on election day is determined at the discretion of the head of the polling station and the farmandar's representative.

- Guard the ballot box
- Provide general security, maintain order and prevent disorder at the polling station
- Preventing the entry of armed or unofficial individuals
- Report violations and deliver the minutes certified by the Electoral Supervisory Board representative and polling officials to the judicial officials
- Accompany polling officials to receive the ballot box and other election day materials from the Electoral Executive Board before election day and return them after votes have been counted
- Coordinate with the farmandar's representative and head of the polling station

OPENING AND SET-UP OF POLLING STATIONS

Beginning as early as 7:00 AM (up to one hour before polls open at 8:00 AM), **polling officials** and the **farmandar's representative** have specific tasks that must be carried out at the polling station. Each polling station typically has between 5-7 polling officials

depending on the size of the station. Candidate agents are permitted to arrive at the polling station to observe this process. Duties of **polling officials** and the **farmandar's representative** include:

- Cross-validate credentials of all other officials, observers and representatives present in the polling station.
- By voting, establish the head, deputy and secretaries for the polling station.
- Inspect the area around the polling station and remove any campaign materials.
- Place the polling station sign near the entrance, so that it is visible to voters.
- Test computer and communication equipment.
- Inspect and recount all election materials, including ballot papers, stamps and forms for taking minutes.
- Review the serial numbers on ballot papers and security seals to ensure they match.
- The head of the polling station should assign roles for polling officials, including:
 - Operating the computer
 - *Shenasnameh* checker
 - Ballot distributor
 - *Shenasnameh* returner
- Ensure proper arrangement of the polling station, including the location of ballot boxes, computers, for checking voters' shenasnamehs, for passing out ballot papers, the polling booths and for displaying the list of candidates (which should be easily viewed and in a place where no mark can be made by voters or others).
- Seal the ballot boxes with the security seals. **This must be done in the presence of observers**, and the serial number on the seals must be recorded in the minutes. If observers have their own seals, they may also seal ballot boxes with their seals and record the number in the minutes.
- The appropriate forms of the minutes must be signed by executive and supervisory officials and the polling station guards prior to opening the polling station.
- Polling officials must also inspect candidates' agents credentials, to ensure they are at the correct polling station to observe.

VOTING

What is the process for a voter?

The main duties of the polling station on election day fall to the polling officials and the farmandar's representative.

Process for a voter - enters polling station¹ -- proceeds to **shenasnameh checker**

1. Voters must have a valid *shenasnameh*, which does not need to have a photo, but their identities will need to be verified in another way (through a national card, license, etc.)

- The checker will inspect it, ensuring the identity of the voter.
- The checker will compare the serial number on the first page to the special serial number for the election, to ensure the document is authentic.
- The checker will inspect the *shenasnameh* and the right index finger of the voter to ensure no ink on the voter's finger, and that the document has not yet been stamped with the current election's stamp. The checker will look to see if the stamp had been erased from the document.
- The checker will apply the presidential election and municipal election stamps in the first empty square on the elections page and use a red pen to designate the number of the election.

2. The **shenasnameh checker** will hand over the shenasnameh to the **polling official** designated with distributing ballot papers (the voter will receive the presidential and city/village council ballots at the same time). The **ballot distributor** will inspect the shenasnameh to verify the election stamps have been applied.

- The ballot distributor will record the necessary voter information on the ballot
- They will imprint the right index finger of the voter onto the designated area of the ballot.
- The ballot distributor will record the date, their name and signature in the appropriate area of the ballot.
- They will stamp the ballot papers with the special stamp for the presidential election or the special stamp for the city and village council.

3. The **ballot paper** must then also be stamped by the **Supervisory Board representative**.

4. The **ballot distributor** will then instruct the voter on how to fill out the ballot (without indicating who the voter should vote for).

¹ There are a few restrictions when it comes to which polling station a voter can choose to go to on election day. For the city and village council elections, the voter should have lived in the electoral district for at least the past year, except for cities with higher than 100,000 inhabitants. For the midterm (similar to by-elections) city and village council elections, only people who have voted previously in the same city are permitted to vote. Voters are permitted to select any polling station as long as it fits with the requirements stated above.

5. The **ballot distributor** will then separate the ballot paper along the dotted line and give it to the voter. They will also separate the special supervisory portion of the ballot.²
6. The **ballot distributor** will then guide the **voter** to the designated voting area, where the voter will cast their ballot.
7. The **ballot distributor** will give the voter's *shenasnameh* to the official tasked with returning *shenasnamehs*.
8. Following properly and secretly filling out their ballot, the voter will place their ballot in the appropriate ballot box.
9. The polling official designated with returning the *shenasnameh* will double check that it bears the current election stamp, and then return it to the voter.
10. The polling official will guide the voter to the exit of the polling station.

What are some examples of election day violations or incidents?

Each country has specific electoral procedures that could be violated on election day, while there are also international norms and principles on the conduct of elections around the world.

Campaigning

In Iran, candidates and political parties must cease campaign activities 24 hours before election day. Anyone seen campaigning in this time period or on election day is in violation of this rule. In addition, voters waiting in line should not be promoting a candidate to other voters around him/herself.

Right to vote

Iranian citizens 18 years of age or older with the appropriate *shenasnameh* (and other identification needed, if applicable) should be able to vote at any polling station within the requirements listed above. If you witness voters, especially a large number of voters, being turned away from the polling station without being permitted to vote, this represents disenfranchisement of voters.

Allowing unauthorized voters to vote

Those who are not Iranian citizens, who are not yet 18 years of age, and who do not possess their *shenasnameh* (and other identification documentation if needed) should not be permitted to vote. If voters are permitted to vote without presenting their *shenasnameh*, they may be unauthorized to do so, which is a violation and could unfairly influence the outcome of the election. It's important to note that it may be

² As some polling stations have started to employ electronic voting for the city and village council races, the special supervisory portion of the ballot may be changed or modified, and procedures changed, to account for the fact that voters will not be completing paper ballots for city and village council elections.

difficult to see if someone is under the age of 18, if someone is using another person's *shenasnameh*, or if someone's *shenasnameh* has already been stamped.

Secrecy of the ballot

An internationally held norm of elections provides voters with the right to cast their ballots in secret, and to place the ballot in the ballot box themselves. This prevents undue influence over the voter to vote for a particular candidate. If you witness a significant number of instances where the secrecy of the ballot is compromised, this is a serious violation that could impact the true will of the electorate.

Procedural errors

Polling officials should follow the voting process, and errors should be noted. While mistakes naturally may occur, continual errors, such as forgetting to stamp ballot papers or not checking voters for ink, represent a flaw in the process and could lead to invalidated ballots or instances of multiple voting, for example.

Assisted voting

If a voter is illiterate or needs assistance due to a physical handicap in completing their ballot, they may designate a family member or another literate person they trust to assist them in filling out their ballot.

Polling officials, law enforcement officials, guards, farmandar's representatives, Supervisory Board (Guardian Council) representatives and the Interior Ministry inspector are **not permitted** to assist voters complete their ballots. Any instance of this is a violation and could represent unauthorized influence or pressure on a voter to vote for someone that may not be their preferred choice.

Layout of the polling station

The polling station should be easily accessible and visible to voters, and the layout and location of observers and designated polling officials should be reasonable. Pay attention to the layout of the polling station and how voters are able to flow through the voting process. If it is unnecessarily complicated or prevents voters from casting their ballot in secret, this could impact the integrity of the election.

Ballot box stuffing

If you see one person submitting more than one ballot in the ballot box, this is a serious violation that is punishable by law under Article 33 of the Presidential Election Law.

Vote buying

Vote buying is the distribution of goods, cash or services in exchange for votes.

Chaos in the polling station

Any incidents of overcrowding, fighting, rioting or chaos inside or near a polling station prevents election officials from effectively administering the election and can deter voters from casting their ballots.

Violence and intimidation

Incidents of violence or intimidation could include any protests or riots that break out in or near the polling station, incidents of security personnel using excessive force, or efforts to coerce citizens to vote certain way on election day.

What are other officials permitted to do?

With a number of officials permitted inside polling stations on election day, it is important to understand each person's official role, and what they can and cannot do.

During the voting period, **farmandar's representatives** are responsible for:

- Coordinating with the polling station guards on protecting the ballot box
- Facilitating the entry and exit of voters from the polling station
- Checking the credentials of candidates' agents
- Assisting in determining where candidates' agents and polling station guards will be located
- Ensuring polling officials are carrying out their duties accurately
- Preventing unauthorized individuals from interfering in the election procedures or assisting voters in casting a ballot
- Maintaining order within the polling station
- Working with the appropriate officials (Supervisory Board representatives, head of the polling station) to address and solve problems and violations that arise
- Announcing the number of paper ballots used to the senior official at prescribed times throughout the day
- Recording problems or violations that occur
- Working to ensure the television and radio are set to receive updates from the Elections Office

During the voting period, the **head and deputy heads of polling stations** are responsible for:

- Paying attention to announcements from the Elections Office throughout the day
- Working with other officials to ensure the voting process runs smoothly
- Reporting violations to the farmandar's representative
- Protecting unused paper ballots from unauthorized persons
- Preventing incidents or violations that would disrupt the voting process
- Ensuring those in line at the end of voting are permitted inside the polling station and that those who arrive after closing are not permitted to vote

- Working with and maintaining communication with the polling station's senior official when necessary.

CLOSING & COUNTING

What does the process look like?

Polling officials will be sure to guide voters out of the polling station after the polling station has officially closed. Polling stations are scheduled to close at 6:00 pm, but may be officially extended. The head of the polling station will determine roles for the counting, including a person to read out results and a person to count votes.

The counting process should proceed as follows:

- A polling official will count the number of used and unused ballots.
- A hole will be punched in unused ballot papers for both elections.
- The ballot boxes will be opened in full view of the Supervisory Board representative.
- A polling official will count the number of ballot papers inside the ballot box without reading who the votes are for.
 - Any ballot papers that were placed in the wrong ballot box should be moved to the correct one, in full view of observers.

Next, the process should continue as follows for each election separately:

- Compare ballots inside the box with the special supervisory sections from ballots and unused ballots, and count the special supervisory sections from ballots.
- Count the invalid and blank votes.
- Read out the votes and count the voters for each election separately (president and then city/village council)

Following the counting process, the minutes should be completed:

- After reading out and counting votes, the numbers will be entered into the minutes.
- The head of the polling station, the farmandar's representative and the Supervisory Board representative should ensure all copies of the minutes are the same.
- Any problems or errors from the voting process or throughout the day should be recorded in the minutes with the signature of polling officials.
- One copy of the minutes, all the used and read ballot papers and the used seals should be placed inside the ballot box, then sealed by the Supervisory Board representative using the special executive and supervisory seals.

- Unused ballot papers, the polling station's stamp, ink pad and other supplies should be given to the Executive Board or their representative separately.
- The special supervisory sections of the ballots should be given to the Supervisory Board representative.
- The ballot boxes, two copies of the minutes, unused ballots and other election materials should be given to the Executive Board or its representative. These materials should be accompanied by the polling station guards and the Supervisory Board representative.

It is important to note that candidates' agents should not interfere in the counting of votes

What does an invalid, or rejected, ballot look like?

Ballots that are blank, or contain the names of candidates that are not running in the election, will be removed before votes are counted.

Who should I report violations or incidents to?

Violations and incidents related to procedure, disenfranchisement, secrecy of the ballot, violence or other measures you believe could compromise the integrity of the election should be reported to polling station officials, who are able to use their discretion to include these reports on the official polling station minutes. However, they are not required to do so; therefore, you should still submit violation reports or complaints to the Electoral Executive boards, Observatory boards or directly the Guardian Council.

Violations and incidents that occur can be submitted as a **complaint** (candidate agents will need to notify their candidate, instructing them to submit a complaint) to the **Electoral District Executive Board** within **two days** of the election. This committee will work with the Electoral District Supervisory Board (under the Guardian Council) to address these complaints within **seven days**. More general complaints with the overall conduct of the election can be reported to the Guardian Council directly.