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Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society
Organizations for Elections



FINAL ELECTION OBSERVATION REPORT

Ethiopia's Seventh General Elections





COALITION OF ETHIOPIAN CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS FOR ELECTIONS (CECOE)

ELECTION OBSERVATION REPORT *Ethiopia's Seventh General Elections*

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
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This report is based on the direct observation of accredited CECOE observers, on the Coalition's own critical incident verification process, and on publicly available documentary sources. Observation findings describe what CECOE's observers saw at the registration and polling stations to which they were deployed. They are not presented as a statistically representative sample of all registration or polling stations in Ethiopia, and they should not be read as national estimates unless the report expressly says so.

CECOE does not adjudicate electoral disputes and does not determine the validity of any election result. That authority rests with the National Election Board of Ethiopia and, on appeal, with the competent courts. Where this report records an allegation made by a political party, a candidate, a citizen, or a public authority, it records the allegation as an allegation and, wherever possible, records the response of the party against whom it was made. Such records should not be read as findings of fact against any named person or institution. The names of individuals appear in this report only where they were already in the public domain or where publication is necessary to the accountability purpose of the report. The identities of CECOE's observers are withheld, and in a small number of cases station identifiers have been omitted where their publication could place an observer at risk.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Acronym	Full form
ACSO	Authority for Civil Society Organizations
ADFM	Amhara Democratic Force Movement
AEUO	All Ethiopian Unity Organization
AU	African Union
AUEOM	African Union Election Observation Mission
CARD	Center for Advancement of Rights and Democracy
CECOE	Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations for Elections
CEHRO	Consortium of Ethiopian Human Rights Organizations
CEU	Cooperation for Ethiopian Unity
CoC	Code of Conduct
CPJ	Committee to Protect Journalists
CSC	Congress for Somali Cause
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DEOW	Digital Election Observation workspace
E.C.	Ethiopian Calendar
EHRC	Ethiopian Human Rights Commission
EHRCO	Ethiopian Human Rights Council
EMA	Ethiopian Media Authority
EMMA	Ethiopian Mass Media Professionals Association
EMWA	Ethiopian Media Women Association
ENA	Ethiopian News Agency
ENDC	Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission
ENDF	Ethiopian National Defense Force
EPRP	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party
ETB	Ethiopian Birr
EWLA	Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association
EZEMA	Ethiopian Citizens for Social Justice
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
FEP	Freedom and Equality Party

Acronym	Full form
GIS	Geographic Information System
GPS	Global Positioning System
HoF	House of Federation
HoPR	House of Peoples' Representatives
ICG	International Crisis Group
IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRA	Interim Regional Administration (Tigray)
ISS	Institute for Security Studies
JCPP	Joint Council of Political Parties
LTO	Long-Term Observer
Medrek	Ethiopian Federal Democratic Unity Forum
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
NaMA	National Movement of Amhara
NEBE	National Election Board of Ethiopia
OFC	Oromo Federalist Congress
OLA	Oromo Liberation Army
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
ONLF	Ogaden National Liberation Front
OTP	One-Time Password
PAM	Pre-Election Assessment Mission
PEC	Peace for Ethiopia Coalition
PP	Prosperity Party
PWD	Person with Disability / Persons with Disabilities
SNNP	Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples
SPAS	Somali People's Alliance for Self-Determination
SRDA	Somali Regional Democratic Alliance
TDF	Tigray Defense Forces

Acronym	Full form
TIMRAN	Timran
TPLF	Tigray People's Liberation Front
VAWiE	Violence Against Women in Elections

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CECOE thanks its 101 member organizations, which recruited, screened, and supported the observer network across every region and city administration in which observation was possible, and whose national reach made citizen observation on this scale achievable, including regional focal persons and zonal coordinators for their effort in coordinating the network. CECOE also thanks the data clerks, data managers, and verification staff who operated the central data center, and the trainers who prepared observers for deployment.

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About CECOE

CECOE is a non-profit, non-governmental civil society organisation comprising over 190 member organisations. CECOE was licensed by the F.D.R.E. Authority for Civil Society Organisations (ACSO) in 2019 with registration number 4748 under the Civil Society Organisations Proclamation 1113/2019, to enhance and coordinate the role of Ethiopian CSOs in election observation, voter education, preventing electoral conflicts, and providing capacity building and support for its member organisations.

CECOE is a member of the East and Horn of Africa Election Observers Network (E-HORN), African Election Observers Network (AfEONet), and a member of the Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors (GNDEM), which connects regional networks and individual monitoring organisations across more than 88 countries worldwide.

Since its establishment, CECOE has conducted observation missions for various electoral events. These missions include the Sidama referendum, the 6th General Election, the South West Peoples Region referendum, the South Ethiopia Region referendum, the Wolaita Sodo referendum rerun, the outstanding and re-elections in Benishangul Gumuz, Afar, Somali, and Meskan and Mareko and the 7th General Election. For these missions, CECOE has deployed over 6,000 observers.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Seventh General Election was held on the announced date, June 1, 2026, in all regions and city administrations except the Tigray region, five contested constituencies, and eight constituencies of the Amhara region. The election took place at a difficult time for the country, marked by shifting global and geopolitical tensions, the breakdown of the Pretoria peace agreement, continued insecurity in parts of the Amhara and Oromia regions, an ongoing National Dialogue, and economic pressures.

The Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations for Elections (CECOE), drawing its observers from 101 of its 190 member organizations, observed the full electoral cycle. CECOE deployed 522 accredited long-term observers (LTOs) across all electoral constituencies except the Tigray region from 21 March to 31 May 2026. LTOs remained in their areas of assignment after election day to monitor the post-election environment. Additionally, 3,477 Short term observers (STOs) comprised both stationary and mobile observers on election day, who together covered 7,723 polling stations, or 15% of the 51,026 polling stations established by the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE).

To assess the process as a whole, CECOE observed voter registration at 3,953 manual and 443 tablet-assisted registration stations. It received 6,072 observation reports on the pre-election environment across five reporting rounds, covering voter education, campaign activities, candidate debates, false and inflammatory information, electoral security, civic space, and bribery and vote-buying. Moreover, it scanned the civic space and documented 179 events bearing on the exercise of fundamental freedoms between 1 June 2025 and 15 June 2026; and received 2,610 post-election reports.

Observers reported serious events through dedicated critical incident forms, each of which was subjected to a verification process, and all observation data were transmitted to a central data center staffed by 80 data clerks and data managers. In addition, CECOE assessed the legal framework and the political, economic, and security context in which the election was conducted.

The election was executed in an enhanced legal framework. On the positive side, Proclamation No. 1394/2025 allowed citizens who turn 18 by polling day to vote and those turning 21 to stand as candidates; reduced the number of supporting signatures required from women candidates and candidates with disabilities; introduced technology for voter and candidate registration; gave civil servants who stand for election paid rather than unpaid leave; restructured the handling of complaints; and prohibited the deduction of party contributions from public salaries. On the other side, the same amendment gave the Board the power to suspend a political party for up to five years, and made the requirements for national party status harder to meet in conflict-affected regions.

After assessing the full electoral cycle, CECOE concludes that the Seventh General Election was administered with technical competence and adhered to standard procedures in most polling stations. The election saw increased participation from voters, candidates, civil society, media, and political parties, and, for the most part, was followed by a peaceful post-election period. The election's main achievements were in its administration; its main shortcomings came from long-standing structural problems and from the areas where the election could not be held.

On the side of achievement, NEBE carried out its full electoral calendar in the planned order and held polling on the date it had announced, something the Sixth General Election did not achieve. This made the process more predictable for political parties, observers, and voters. It has also shared more information about its operations; published a polling station list with standard codes and GPS locations for about two-thirds of stations; shared its lists of election officials with political parties for comment; allocated free airtime across 50 media outlets through a public lottery; held a public lottery for the order of parties on the ballot; and organized nineteen televised debates. It accredited 224 civil society organizations for voter education and observation, more than 1,100 journalists from 37 media institutions, and international observer missions from the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

Participation was the highest ever recorded. NEBE registered 54,057,861 voters, of whom more than 5.5 million registered digitally and about 46% were women. A total of 51,734,193 people voted, a turnout of 95%. The number of candidates grew from 9,000 in 2021 to 10,438 in 2026, of whom 2,691, or 25.8%, were women. Of the country's 1,153 constituencies, 958, or 83.1%, were contested by more than one party. Additionally special registration and voting arrangements were made for military personnel living in camps and internally displaced persons.

At the polling stations CECOE observed on election day, procedures were followed at the majority of stations. Voting materials were essentially complete everywhere. Ballot boxes were shown to be empty before being sealed at almost all stations and were placed in clear view. Voting started by 7:00 a.m. at 99% of stations. No campaign materials or campaigning were seen inside stations or within the 200-meter radius at 100% of stations. Election officials gave neutral voting instructions at 99% of stations; indelible ink was applied at 96% and ballot papers were stamped at 97%; the secrecy of the vote was respected at 93%; and results were posted publicly at the station at 97%.

The post-election period was, for the most part, calm. Of the reports that addressed the question, 96% recorded no violence or intimidation connected to the announcement of results; media coverage of the results was assessed as neutral in 95% of reports; and public sentiment was positive or neutral in 91%. NEBE announced results for 486 of the 501 contested seats of HoPR of which the Prosperity party won 438 or 90%, and 2,410 of the 2,681 declared regional and city council seats. Sixteen other parties and eight independent candidates share the remaining declared federal seats.

The framework for accountability was strengthened, and the Board used it. NEBE gave CECOE its register of the 119 complaints submitted during the election. The Board fully upheld 3 complaints and partially upheld 33; it ordered administrative measures in 28 decisions, referred 22 cases for criminal investigation, and on its own initiative ordered recounts at 122 polling stations. At the same time, the standard of evidence the Board required was hard to meet for complainants who had no agents on the ground: all eleven complaints brought by individual citizens were dismissed, as were 63 of the 100 brought by political parties.

The limitations of the election were that not all citizens had the same opportunity to vote. First, elections did not take place in 46 constituencies in Tigray and Amhara region. Second, despite higher participation, there was coercion to register by local officials. Similarly, there were also threats to voters not to participate in the electoral process by non-state armed groups in Amhara and Oromia Regions.

On election day, widespread and lengthy queues were observed. The prolonged wait times led to severe exhaustion among voters, poll workers, and election observers, raising concerns for voter safety and sustained participation. Furthermore, these long delays strained operational capacity, increasing the risk of procedural non-compliance during voting and counting, among others.

Third, the constituency boundaries were drawn in 1994, when the population was projected at 53.5 million; they were used in 2026 to elect a parliament for an estimated 109.5 million people. This means roughly 208,570 people per constituency, against the original standard of between 50,000 to 150,000. The 2007 census was never applied to the boundaries, and the 15% deviation rule in the law has never been used.

Four, the electoral calendar was published on 9 December 2025, less than six months before polling day. About nine and a half months of preparations, including the setting up of constituency offices, the accreditation of voter-education organizations, and the recruitment of election officers, therefore took place without a published schedule. Each of these preparatory activities requires rigorous strategic planning by stakeholders engaged in electoral activities. However, these phases were executed without the transparent, published deadlines that a formal electoral calendar is designed to provide.

Five, violence and undue pressure were reported in some locations. CECOE documented 56 critical incidents in the pre-election period and more than 300 incident entries for election day and the days around it. Two election officers were killed and a third abducted at Debre Markos; officers were abducted in Awabel, Dehana, and Nole Kaba; a station chairperson was beaten in Wondo Genet; and officers were threatened by SMS, on social media, and in public gatherings.

Six, the competition environment saw Prosperity Party contesting in 64 constituencies alone without competition. Additionally, there were also incidents of using government vehicles for campaigning in 112 reports.

Seven, Political party agents were present at only 14% of observed voter registration stations and 65% of polling stations on election day, while non-CECOE citizen observers were present at just 8% to 12% of registration centers. This lack of party representation served as a primary reason for the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) dismissing several election complaints, citing the absence of polling agents as grounds.

Eight, at 2% of observed stations the count was moved away from the polling station, in some cases to woreda offices, police stations, or military camps, with no observer present. At 3% of stations election officers were seen marking ballot papers, and at some stations observers were made to leave during the count which could have the impact of paving the ground for fraudulent activities.

The reported election budget of approximately 11 billion birr for 54,057,861 registered voters amounts to roughly 204 birr per registered voter. Comparable to African states, including Kenya and Nigeria, on a per-registered-voter basis the budget allocation for Ethiopia is considerably small.

With regards to inclusion, on election day, 94% of observed polling stations were accessible to persons with disabilities without help. During registration, however, 88% of manual and 77% of tablet stations could not be entered without help, and the legal requirement to read out the information of assisted registrants was followed at fewer than half of stations. With regard to assisted voting, at 87 (3%) polling stations a person other than the chairperson was observed assisting different voters more than once.

Voter education was not seen or heard in the observed areas in 45% of pre-election reports. 91% of the voter education was provided by vernacular and 9% was delivered in the federal working language.

While introducing digital registration is commendable, there were implementation gaps, such as frequent interruptions, shifts from digital to manual registration, and mandatory national ID requirements for candidate registration, that posed challenges.

Drawing on its observation of the full electoral cycle, CECOIE recommends to the NEBE, the Government and the House of Peoples' Representatives, the security agencies, political parties, the media, civil society, and Ethiopia's international partners, for consideration in future elections.

1. Drawing on the findings that voter education was only provided in 45% of observed areas, CECOIE recommends the adequate allocation of funding for civic and voter education activities by NEBE, civil society and education institutions. Further, CECOIE recommends the strengthening of civic and voter education activities so that citizens make informed decisions.

2. Reduce the maximum number of voters assigned to a single polling station.
3. Increase NEBE's budget, using comparisons with the electoral commissions of similar African countries as the benchmark.
4. Equip polling stations with tactile ballot guides, materials in Braille, and other tools so that voters with disabilities can vote independently, and apply the election-day accessibility standard to registration stations as well.
5. Publish the electoral calendar at least one year before polling day, so that no major electoral activity takes place before its schedule is public.
6. Make sure that votes are always counted at the polling station where they were cast and that results are posted at the station; treat the removal of a ballot box for counting elsewhere as an event that must be justified in writing and witnessed by observers; and publish results down to the polling station level.
7. Take steps to make votes carry equal weight across constituencies, including a census-based revision of boundaries, with public consultation, and respect for the 15% deviation rule in the law.
8. Publish the outcomes of the criminal referrals and administrative measures recorded in the complaints register
9. The government shall investigate and prosecute the killings, abductions, and assaults committed against election officers, and report publicly on the outcomes.
10. Political parties should send accredited agents to registration stations as well as polling stations, publicly reject violence, intimidation, and hate speech, and give women and young people a greater role in their ranks and leadership.
11. Strengthen the campaign finance rules by setting a ceiling on campaign spending with timely public disclosure, and spell out and enforce the ban on using state resources for campaign advantage.

CHAPTER 1: POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SECURITY CONTEXT

This chapter situates the Seventh General Election within Ethiopia's broader political, economic, and security environment. It traces the legacy of the Sixth General Election, the unravelling of the Pretoria Peace Agreement and the TPLF's takeover of the Tigray interim administration, the dynamics of party competition and coalition-building, the ongoing National Dialogue, the fragmentation of the security landscape, and the economic and geopolitical pressures under which the electoral cycle unfolded.

1.1. The Legacy of the Sixth General Election

Ethiopia's Seventh General Election, held on 1 June 2026, was preceded by a five-year period marked by significant political and security developments. The ruling Prosperity Party (PP) won more than 95 % of the seats contested in 2021, entrenching its dominance of the House of Peoples' Representatives (HoPR) and setting the competitive baseline against which the 2026 contest would be measured. However, the 2021 election itself was incomplete. Because of insecurity, logistical constraints, and registration shortfalls, a second round of voting was held on 30 September 2021 in the Somali, Harari, and Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples (SNNP) regions. Furthermore, no election could be held in Tigray, and 66 of 95 regional council seats in Benishangul-Gumuz remained unfilled until June 2024, when outstanding and re-elections were finally administered.

While the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) managed to gradually resolve vacuums in places like Benishangul-Gumuz, the total exclusion of Tigray from the electoral map pointed to a much deeper systemic crisis, one rooted in the fragile aftermath of the armed clashes and the contested legal status of its former ruling party.

1.2. Tigray's Political Fracture: Deregistration, Factionalism, and Regional Governance

The legal and political status of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) has evolved from a severe legal deadlock into deep factional division, culminating in the unilateral overhaul of the regional governance structure in Tigray.¹ Following the outbreak of the Tigray war, the party was initially deregistered in January 2021 by the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) under NEBE Proclamation No. 1162/2019² due to its involvement in armed rebellion and unilateral elections, followed by a formal parliament terrorism designation³. Although the November 2022

¹ National Election Board of Ethiopia. (2021, January 18). [NEBE cancels registration of TPLF](#) [Decision]. Reproduced by the Embassy of Ethiopia.

² Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. (2019). Ethiopian Electoral, Political Parties Registration and Election's Code of Conduct Proclamation No. 1162/2019, Art. 98. Federal Negarit Gazeta.

³ FDRE House of Peoples' Representatives. (2021, May). *Resolution designating the Tigray People's Liberation Front a terrorist organization*. Federal Negarit Gazeta.

Pretoria Peace Agreement led to the removal of its terrorist label⁴, the party's legal reinstatement remained contested. Statutory adjustments under Proclamation No. 1332/2024 established a "special registration" pathway for former armed movements transitioning to peaceful politics⁵. However, the NEBE revoked this status in May 2025⁶ after the TPLF rejected being classified as a "new" party and failed to fulfill statutory assembly requirements⁷.

This legal ambiguity exacerbated intra-party friction, dividing TPLF leadership into two prominent factions: one led by TPLF Chairman Debretsion Gebremichael, which rejected NEBE decisions⁸, and another under former Interim Regional Administration (IRA) President Getachew Reda⁹. Denied access to legacy TPLF party infrastructure, Getachew's alignment formed a new political party—Tigray Democratic Solidarity (Simret)—which secured official regional registration with NEBE. Concurrently, the un-demobilized Tigray Defense Forces (TDF) remained active outside the constitutional framework outlined in Articles 52 and 87 of the FDRE Constitution, as well as Article 6 of the Pretoria Agreement. Leveraging influence over these persistent armed structures, the Debretsion-led faction challenged the federal mandate and pressed for the restoration of pre-war governance bodies.

The governance crisis escalated through a series of administrative reshuffles and unilateral actions. Following Getachew Reda's departure and subsequent federal appointment as Minister-Advisor on East African Affairs,¹⁰ TDF Commander Lt. Gen. Tadesse Werede assumed leadership of the Interim Administration in April 2025.¹¹ However, when Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed unilaterally extended Tadesse's mandate in April 2026,¹² TPLF leadership denounced the move as a breach of the Pretoria Agreement.¹³ In May 2026, 172 members of the suspended pre-war Tigray State Council convened unilaterally to remove General Tadesse and elect Debretsion Gebremichael as Regional President.¹⁴ Debretsion assumed control of executive offices in Mekelle,¹⁵ a shift marked by TPLF-aligned forces physically preventing the ousted

⁴ African Union. (2022, November 2). [*Agreement for lasting peace through a permanent cessation of hostilities between the Government of the FDRE and the TPLF*](#). UN Peacemaker.

⁵ Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. (2024). *Electoral, Political Parties Registration and Election's Code of Conduct (Amendment) Proclamation No. 1332/2024*. Federal Negarit Gazeta.

⁶ Ethiopian News Agency. (2025, May 14). [*Election Board revokes legal status of Tigray People's Liberation Front*](#). ENA.

⁷ CIVICUS Monitor. (2025, August 15). [*Ethiopia: Political bans, media raids as fragile peace faces risk*](#).

⁸ Mitiku, M. (2024, September 16). [*In-depth: TPLF leadership rift: Factional infighting threatens Tigray's fragile peace, post-war recovery*](#). Addis Standard.

⁹ Beyene, M. (2025, March 26). [*Divided and disputed: TPLF's fractured leadership, electoral board feud threaten Tigray's fragile peace*](#). Addis Standard.

¹⁰ Ethiopia Observer. (2026, June 4). [*Getachew Reda says he is not angry over exit as leader*](#).

¹¹ Borkena. (2025, April 8). [*Lt. Gen. Tadesse Werede appointed president of Tigray Interim Administration*](#).

¹² Ethiopian News Agency. (2026, April 8). [*PM Abiy extends the tenure of Tigray region interim chief administrator by one year*](#). ENA.

¹³ Africa Confidential. (2026, May 8). [*TPLF buries the Pretoria peace deal as Washington courts Asmara*](#), 67(10).

¹⁴ Ethiopia Observer. (2026, May 5). [*TPLF reconstitutes pre-war regional council, elects Debretsion president*](#).

¹⁵ Stratfor. (2026, April 30). [*Ethiopia: TPLF calls on Tigray chief administrator Tadesse to hand over power*](#). RANE Worldview.

General Tadesse from attending a scheduled diplomatic engagement with the U.S. Ambassador.¹⁶ This unilateral dissolution of the post-war interim administration directly challenges federal authority and highlights persistent risks to regional stability.¹⁷

1.3. Political Party Dynamics and the Competitive Landscape

The scale of candidate participation in the Seventh General Election exceeded that of the Sixth, although the number of competing parties did not. On 23 February 2026, the National Election Board of Ethiopia unveiled the symbols for 48 political parties registered for the seventh general election. However, only 42 parties actually took part in the election. Included in this group were two political coalitions, one comprising eight political parties and the other four, as well as a front consisting of four parties. Overall, this number represents a slight decline compared to the 47 political parties that took part in the 2021 elections.¹⁸ Measured by candidates rather than by parties, the direction of movement reverses: the 2021 cycle produced approximately 9,000 candidates,¹⁹ whereas the seventh cycle produced 10,438, of whom 80 stood as independents.²⁰ Of the 10,438 candidates, 2,080 contested seats in the House of Peoples' Representatives and 8,358 contested regional and city council seats. The ruling party publicly signalled that it would concede space to the opposition. It declined to field candidates in some opposition-leaning localities and in 284 regional and city council seats,²¹ and the Prime Minister told parliament in January 2026 that opposition representation would grow “by five to ten times.”²²

Coalition Building

In the 2026 electoral landscape, coalition-building served as a critical survival and consolidation strategy for opposition forces aiming to retain their legal status under the NEBE and withstand the dominant footprint of the ruling Prosperity Party.

¹⁶ Addis Standard. (2026, July 15). [*Former Tigray Interim Administration president Tadesse Werede reportedly blocked from meeting U.S. Ambassador.*](#)

¹⁷ Omna Tigray. (2026, June 29). [*On recent political developments in Tigray and the path forward.*](#)

¹⁸ Zemelak A. Ayele. (2022, March 30). COVID-19 and Ethiopia's sixth general election: Case study. International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA).

<https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/covid-19-and-ethiopias-sixth-general-election-en.pdf>

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ National Election Board of Ethiopia. (2026). Certified candidate lists of the 7th General Election [Data set]. NEBE. <https://nebe.org.et/en/candidate-list>; Africa Uncensored. (2026, May 31). Ethiopian election 2026: All you need to know about registered candidates.

<https://africauncensored.online/blog/2026/06/01/ethiopian-election-2026-all-you-need-to-know-about-registered-candidates/>

²¹ Africa Uncensored. (2026, May 31). Ethiopian election 2026: All you need to know about registered candidates. Africa Uncensored.

<https://africauncensored.online/blog/2026/06/01/ethiopian-election-2026-all-you-need-to-know-about-registered-candidates/>

²² The Reporter Ethiopia. (2026, May 30). Ethiopia heads to seventh election amid unsettled debates over security, fairness. The Reporter Ethiopia. <https://www.thereporterethiopia.com/50930/> (reporting the Prime Minister's January 2026 statement to Parliament that opposition representation would grow by five to ten times)

- **Somali People's Alliance for Self-Determination (SPAS):** Formed in mid-January 2026, this newly formed regional alliance brought together three distinct political organizations the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), the Congress for Somali Cause (CSC), and the Somali Regional Democratic Alliance (SRDA) in an effort to pool their political and civic resources ahead of the June 1 polls while explicitly declaring an end to their unilateral, futile engagements with the federal government.²³
- **Cooperation for Ethiopian Unity (CEU):** Emerged as a large opposition bloc of centrist, pan-Ethiopian factions that fielded 143 candidates for the House of Peoples' Representatives and 827 candidates for regional and city councils, making it the third-largest contestant by candidate numbers in both contests. It brought together several opposition parties, including the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP), the Enat Party, the All Ethiopian Unity Organization (AEUO), the One Ethiopia Democratic Party, and the Amhara Gionawi Movement. The CEU focused primarily on urban centers such as Addis Ababa, running on a platform of cross-ethnic national unity, democratic reform, and peacebuilding.²⁴
- **Peace for Ethiopia Coalition (PEC):** Established as a newly formed electoral alliance for the 2026 cycle following the amendments to the electoral law. Its key member organizations included the Agew National Council (Shengo), the Gamo Democratic Party, the Gambella Peoples' Freedom Movement, the Kaffa Green Party, Agew for Justice and Democracy, the Kaffa Peoples' Union, Tigray De
- mocratic Cooperation, and the Mocha Democratic Party. Composed largely of regional-interest parties from southern ethnic zones and peripheral lowlands, the PEC championed localized platforms advocating self-determination and local conflict resolution, and it fielded 329 candidates for regional and city councils, the fifth-largest such slate in the cycle.²⁵
- **Medrek (The Ethiopian Federal Democratic Forum):** Historically composed of four to five distinct parties and factions and primarily anchored by the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC) under Dr. Merera Gudina alongside remnants of regional social-democratic forces this legacy umbrella coalition had become highly fragmented by the 2026 cycle. Despite its diminished structural cohesion, Medrek remained the primary

²³ Addis Standard. (2026, January 28). Somali political groups announce formation of new alliance, declare end to engagement with federal government. Addis Standard, via allAfrica.

<https://allafrica.com/stories/202601280225.html>

²⁴ Africa Uncensored. (2026, May 31). Ethiopian election 2026: All you need to know about registered candidates. Africa Uncensored.

<https://africauncensored.online/blog/2026/06/01/ethiopian-election-2026-all-you-need-to-know-about-registered-candidates/>

²⁵ Ethiopian News Agency. (2026, March 28). Upcoming election platform for establishing consolidated multi-party system: Competing political party leaders. ENA. https://www.ena.et/web/eng/w/eng_8563691

vehicle under which parties like the OFC chose to selectively engage in the June 1, 2026, general elections to secure their formal registration.²⁶

Shift to a Strategy of Localized, Token Participation

While groups like the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC) had boycotted the 2021 General Elections, they faced the strict legal risk of deregistration in 2026 for missing two consecutive national elections. To preserve their formal registration, both groups pivoted to a strategy of highly restricted, nominal participation. The OFC and the OLF fielded candidates in selective constituencies; notably, the OLF actively participated in the televised national pre-election debates to air its structural grievances. However, the geographic campaign footprints of both organizations were severely choked out by active conflict, widespread insecurity, harassment, and the closure of many of their regional offices. This forced a sharp operational divergence between the two Oromo parties: the OFC selectively ran its candidates primarily in highly secured urban zones like Addis Ababa-Sheger City, whereas the OLF shifted its focus to alternate regional constituencies outside the capital, with both parties largely bypassing their primary grassroots constituency base in rural Oromia.²⁷ Similarly, the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) technically maintained its legal presence on the ballot, but its minimal operational footprint meant it joined Oromo opposition forces in raising the same long-standing grievances during the debates regarding the complete closure of competitive political space.²⁸

Contestation and Results: The 2026 Ethiopian Election

In January 2026, a coalition of eight opposition parties publicly questioned NEBE's neutrality and warned that the requirements of the digital registration system, including national digital identification, would systematically exclude many Ethiopians. NEBE rejected these allegations in a detailed written response of eight pages, in which it set out the legal basis of the digital systems, the consultations conducted with political parties and civil society during their development, the availability of assisted and manual registration for citizens without a national digital ID, and the support arrangements, including training, manuals, a toll-free hotline, and a dedicated support channel, made available to parties experiencing difficulty. CECOE records

²⁶ Berhanu Degefa, H., & Getachew Abate, E. (2026, May 29). Election as Quintot: Can the upcoming polls move Ethiopia's politics beyond survival? African Center for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes. <https://www.accord.org.za/analysis/election-as-qintot-can-the-upcoming-polls-move-ethiopias-politics-beyond-survival/>

²⁷ Berhanu Degefa, H., & Getachew Abate, E. (2026, May 29). Election as Quintot: Can the upcoming polls move Ethiopia's politics beyond survival? African Center for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes. <https://www.accord.org.za/analysis/election-as-qintot-can-the-upcoming-polls-move-ethiopias-politics-beyond-survival/> ; UK Home Office. (2026, March). Country policy and information note: Ethiopia, Oromos, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) (Version 2.0). https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/69b2c75b97f6fef21f687af8/ETH_CPIN_Oromos_OLF_and_OLA.pdf

²⁸ Ismail, M. (2026, May). Ethiopia is about to hold another sham election. Journal of Democracy. <https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/online-exclusive/ethiopia-is-about-to-hold-another-sham-election/>

both the allegation and the Board's response without adjudicating between them, and notes that the documented effects of the digital prerequisites on candidacies are set out in Section 5.1.5 below.^{29 30}

Separately, the competitive map contained significant gaps. The Prosperity Party ultimately faced no opponent in 65 constituencies of the House of Peoples' Representatives, and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) confirmed violations in pre-election processes in parts of the country. CECOE does not treat these findings as consequences of the digital registration requirements. The single-party constituencies have several plausible sources, including the withdrawal of opposition parties from insecure areas and their own strategic decisions on where to compete, and the geographic concentration of those constituencies is analyzed in Section 5.1.5.

When the results were announced, the Prosperity Party had won 438 of the 486 seats declared for the House of Peoples' Representatives. EZEMA emerged as the leading opposition party with 13 seats, followed by the National Movement of Amhara with 6, and by Medrek, the Amhara Democratic Force Movement, and the Freedom and Equality Party with 3 each. The Cooperation for Ethiopian Unity won 2 seats, ten further parties won one seat each, and independent candidates won 8. No results were declared for the 38 deferred Tigray constituencies or for the constituencies where voting was suspended or re-run.

1.4. The National Dialogue and the Electoral Timeline

The Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission (ENDC) was established on 29 December 2021 under Proclamation No. 1265/2021 with a mandate to build national consensus after the Tigray war. From the outset, the Commission was dogged by contestation over the inclusiveness of its formation: only 3 of its 11 commissioners are women; the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Islamic Affairs Supreme Council raised representation concerns. The Caucus of Opposition Parties (CoP), an umbrella group composed of 11 opposition parties, demanded that the process be paused and restarted. Major armed movements including the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA)

²⁹ The Board's written response is an unpublished document on file with CECOE; it has not been published on the Board's website. For the opposition parties' original statement see The Reporter Ethiopia. (2026, January 24). Opposition parties reject 'unaudited' digital election system as national vote approaches. <https://www.thereporterethiopia.com/48768/> and Geeska. (2026, January 25). Ethiopia opposition raises alarm over upcoming elections.

<https://www.geeska.com/en/ethiopia-opposition-raises-alarm-over-upcoming-elections>

³⁰ Fana Broadcasting Corporate. (2026, June 21). Ethiopia's ruling Prosperity Party wins 438 seats as NEBE announces final results of the 7th General Election. FBC.

<https://www.fanamc.com/english/ethiopias-ruling-prosperity-party-wins-438-seats-as-nebe-announces-final-results-of-the-7th-general-election/>

and Fano militias declined to participate, and in May 2024, a coalition of eleven opposition parties formally accused the Commission of political bias.³¹

For the Seventh General Election, voting took place prior to the conclusion of the national dialogue. Parliament twice extended the Commission's mandate, most recently to October 2026, meaning that the questions the dialogue was intended to settle including the future of ethnic federalism and potential constitutional reform remained open throughout the campaign. Analysts observed that the Prosperity Party's renewed parliamentary majority after 1 June 2026 could enable it to pursue constitutional changes ahead of, rather than through, a completed dialogue, a sequencing concern repeatedly raised by opposition actors and civil society.^{32 33}

1.5. The Security Landscape

Fragmented Security Landscape and Electoral Disruptions

Since 2021, Ethiopia's security environment has undergone a structural transformation: the state moved from managing a centralized, high-intensity conventional war in the north to confronting fragmented, asymmetric insurgencies led by armed non-state actors across multiple regional states.³⁴ Although the Pretoria Agreement of November 2022 sharply reduced conventional warfare, it left unresolved territorial disputes (notably Welkait and Raya), and the federal government's April 2023 decision to dissolve regional special forces and integrate them into national structures accelerated the consolidation of insurgent networks most consequentially the Fano movement in the Amhara Region.³⁵

By the 2026 electoral period, the two most significant subnational security challenges were the Fano insurgency in Amhara and OLA operations in western, southern, and central Oromia. Both movements rely on decentralized command, ambushes, attacks on local administrations, and the disruption of transport corridors, tactics that erode state presence without seeking permanent

³¹ Addis Standard. (2024, May). Caucus of opposition parties accuses National Dialogue Commission of political bias and failure to ensure inclusivity. Addis Standard. <https://addisstandard.com/caucus-of-opposition-parties-accuses-national-dialogue-commission-of-political-bias-and-failure-to-ensure-inclusivity/>

³² Ethiopian News Agency. (2026, February). The House of Peoples' Representatives extends the mandate of the National Dialogue Commission by eight months. ENA. https://www.ena.et/web/eng/w/eng_8339898

³³ Ethiopian News Agency. (2026, February). The House of Peoples' Representatives extends the mandate of the National Dialogue Commission by eight months. ENA. https://www.ena.et/web/eng/w/eng_8339898; The Reporter Ethiopia. (2026, May 30). Ethiopia heads to the seventh election amid unsettled debates over security and fairness. <https://www.thereporterethiopia.com/50930/>

³⁴ Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project. (2026). Ethiopia Peace Observatory: Conflict trends 2021–2026. ACLED. <https://acleddata.com/ethiopia-peace-observatory/>; Center for Strategic and International Studies. (2026). Ethiopia's fragmenting security landscape. CSIS.

³⁵ Necho, A., & Debebe, Y. (2024, February). Understanding the Fano insurgency in Ethiopia's Amhara region [Briefing paper]. Rift Valley Institute Peace Research Facility. https://riftvalley.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Understanding-the-Fano-Insurgency_final-1.pdf

territorial control.³⁶ These dynamics translated directly into electoral consequences. NEBE postponed voter registration and suspended polling in eight Amhara constituencies, including areas of South Gondar, West Gondar, Ambassel, and Dega Damot, where minimum security conditions could not be guaranteed. In addition, security incidents disrupted operations at approximately 143 polling stations across the Amhara and Oromia regions. The entire Tigray region, still governed under an interim administration and facing internal TPLF factional disputes, saw its vote indefinitely deferred.³⁷ In the seventh cycle, lower-intensity insecurity in Afar, Somali, and Benishangul-Gumuz affected logistics and the movement of materials and personnel along vulnerable corridors rather than the feasibility of voting as such. Even in these regions, however, NEBE suspended or cancelled voter registration in selected localities where procedural integrity could not be guaranteed.³⁸

NEBE's Conflict-Sensitive Response and the "Uneven Franchise" Lesson

NEBE responded to this environment with a differentiated, conflict-sensitive operational posture. The Board conducted constituency-level security risk assessments and held consultations with regional presidents, mayors, security officials, national parties, and civil society organizations. It deployed joint monitoring teams comprising Board monitors, party representatives, and civil society, and it postponed or suspended activities in those places where minimum standards could not be met.³⁹ The Seventh General Election therefore illustrates a broader lesson observed across conflict-affected African elections. Localised violence rarely prevents a national election outright, but it produces sharp regional disparities in access, participation, and administrative quality, and those disparities bear directly on the inclusiveness and perceived legitimacy of the outcome.⁴⁰

1.6. Economic and Geopolitical Pressures on the Electoral Environment

The electoral cycle also unfolded under acute economic and geopolitical strain. The Russia–Ukraine war (from February 2022) drove global food, fuel, and fertilizer inflation that hit

³⁶ International Crisis Group. (2025). Ethiopia's Oromo conflict: The limits of dialogue. ICG; Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project. (2026). Ethiopia Peace Observatory conflict monitoring dashboard. ACLED. <https://acleddata.com/ethiopia-peace-observatory/>

³⁷ Ethiopia Observer. (2026, May 26). Elections will not be held in 46 constituencies across the Amhara and Tigray regions. Ethiopia Observer. <https://www.ethiopiaobserver.com/2026/05/26/elections-will-not-be-held-in-46-constituencies-across-the-amhara-and-tigray-regions/>

³⁸ Ethiopia Peace Observatory. (2026). Regional conflict updates: Afar, Somali and Benishangul-Gumuz. ACLED. <https://acleddata.com/ethiopia-peace-observatory/>

³⁹ National Election Board of Ethiopia. (2026, March 12). NEBE consults political parties on security issues for the 7th General Election. NEBE. <https://nebe.org.et/en/node/1280>

⁴⁰ African Union Election Observation Mission. (2026, June 3). Preliminary statement of the African Union Election Observation Mission to the 1 June 2026 general elections in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. African Union Commission. <https://www.peaceau.org/en/article/preliminary-statement-african-union-election-observation-mission-to-the-1-june-2026-general-elections-in-the-federal-democratic-republic-of-ethiopia-addis-ababa-3-june-2026>

import-dependent East African economies particularly hard, while the direct Israel–Iran military confrontation of April 2026 disrupted Red Sea and Gulf shipping a severe exposure for Ethiopia, which routes the overwhelming majority of its trade through the Addis–Djibouti corridor raising freight costs, depressing remittances, and squeezing foreign exchange reserves.⁴¹ Beyond the shocks documented, two domestic developments deserve emphasis. First, Ethiopia's macroeconomic reform program including the July 2024 move to a market-determined exchange rate under an IMF-supported arrangement produced a steep depreciation of the birr and a difficult cost-of-living adjustment that shaped the material context in which voters and parties operated.⁴² Second, the government's national digital identity program (Fayda) became newly salient to electoral inclusion once digital candidate registration made national ID a practical prerequisite.⁴³

Finally, the international assistance environment contracted dramatically. Sweeping donor policy reviews in early 2025 culminated in the termination of approximately 70 % of major democracy, human rights, and governance awards globally, with electoral assistance among the heaviest casualties; independent electoral commissions and citizen observation networks across the region including in Ethiopia were forced to downscale operations precisely as electoral demands peaked.⁴⁴ Regional tensions with Eritrea including mutual accusations over arms interdictions near the northern border in early 2026 and Ethiopia's assertive Red Sea access discourse since October 2023 added a further layer of strategic uncertainty to the pre-electoral period.⁴⁵

⁴¹ International Monetary Fund. (2026, April 16). Regional economic outlook for sub-Saharan Africa, April 2026. IMF.

<https://www.imf.org/en/publications/reo/ssa/issues/2026/04/16/regional-economic-outlook-for-sub-saharan-africa-april-2026>; United Nations Development Programme. (2026). Red Sea trade disruption impact assessment. UNDP.

⁴² International Monetary Fund. (2024, July 29). The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia: Request for an arrangement under the Extended Credit Facility (IMF Country Report No. 2024/253). IMF. <https://www.imf.org/en/publications/cr/issues/2024/07/29/the-federal-democratic-republic-of-ethiopia-request-of-an-arrangement-under-the-extended-552778>

⁴³ National Election Board of Ethiopia. (2026, January 6). NEBE inaugurates the first of its kind voter and candidate registration system. NEBE. <https://nebe.org.et/en/node/1222>; The Reporter Ethiopia. (2026, January 24). Opposition parties reject 'unaudited' digital election system as national vote approaches. <https://www.thereporterethiopia.com/48768/>

⁴⁴ Global Democracy Coalition. (2025, November 12). When aid fades: Impacts and pathways for the global democracy ecosystem. GDC. <https://globaldemocracycoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/When-Aid-Fades-Impacts-and-Pathways-for-the-Global-Democracy-Ecosystem-Report.pdf>

⁴⁵ Reuters. (2026, February 9). Eritrea calls Ethiopia's accusations of military aggression 'deplorable'. Reuters, via WKZO.

<https://wkzo.com/2026/02/09/eritrea-calls-ethiopias-accusations-of-military-aggression-deplorable/>; Mhaka, T. (2023, November 14). Abiy Ahmed's imperial ambitions are bad news for Africa and the world. Al Jazeera.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2023/11/14/abiy-ahmeds-imperial-ambitions-are-bad-news-for-africa-and-the-world>

CHAPTER 2: THE ELECTION MANAGEMENT BODY

This chapter describes the institution that administered the Seventh General Election. It sets out the constitutional and statutory basis of the National Election Board of Ethiopia, the composition and renewal of its Management Board, its organizational structure and the temporary field administration through which it reaches the voter, the electorate and polling network it managed, the digital systems it introduced for this cycle, its accreditation of electoral stakeholders, and the budgetary conditions under which it worked.

2.1. Constitutional and Statutory Basis

The National Election Board of Ethiopia is the sole body constitutionally empowered to conduct elections in Ethiopia. Article 102 of the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia establishes an independent national board with the mandate to conduct free and fair elections impartially, and provides that its members are appointed by the House of Peoples' Representatives upon the recommendation of the Prime Minister.⁴⁶ Article 103(5) assigns the determination of electoral constituencies not to the Board but to the House of Federation, on the basis of census results and a Board proposal.

Below the constitutional layer, Proclamation No. 1133/2019 re-established the Board as an institution accountable to the House of Peoples' Representatives, with a transparent, committee-based nomination procedure for its members and the power to issue implementing directives. Proclamation No. 1162/2019 consolidated the previously fragmented electoral code into a single instrument regulating voter and candidate registration, party formation and obligations, constituency arrangements, campaign conduct and finance, media access, observation, and dispute resolution. The Amended Electoral Law Proclamation No. 1394/2025 revised 26 articles of Proclamation No. 1162/2019 ahead of the seventh cycle.⁴⁷

2.2. Composition and Renewal of the Management Board

The Board is governed by a Management Board whose members serve a six-year term, renewable once. The seventh cycle was administered by a Management Board that had been substantially renewed during the inter-election period. Chairperson Birtukan Mideksa, appointed in November 2018, resigned with effect from 7 August 2023. On 12 December 2023 the House of Peoples' Representatives appointed Melatework Hailu as Chairperson, following the work of an eight-member Recruitment Committee established by the Prime Minister on 6 November 2023 and chaired by Priest Tagay Tadele of the Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia. The terms of the Deputy Chairperson and of two Board members expired in June 2025, and on 12 June 2025

⁴⁶ Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Proclamation No. 1/1995, Federal Negarit Gazeta (1995).

⁴⁷ National Electoral Board of Ethiopia Establishment Proclamation No. 1133/2019, Federal Negarit Gazeta (2019); Ethiopian Electoral, Political Parties Registration and Election's Code of Conduct Proclamation No. 1162/2019, Federal Negarit Gazeta (2019); Media Proclamation No. 1238/2021, Federal Negarit Gazeta (2021); Organizations of Civil Societies Proclamation No. 1113/2019, Federal Negarit Gazeta (2019).

the House appointed Tesfaye Neway as Vice Chairperson and Nesim Ali, Teklit Yimesil, and Fikre Gebrehiwot as Board members.

2.3. Organizational Structure and the Field Administration

The Board operates through four tiers. At the apex sits the Management Board. Beneath it, a permanent Secretariat at the federal level carries the Board's professional and administrative functions. Below the Secretariat sit branch and constituency offices, whose organization for this cycle ran from 23 February 2025 to 24 December 2025. At the base sits a temporary field structure of election officers recruited afresh for each electoral event, which is the point at which election administration meets the voter.

The size and composition of the field structure are governed by directive. Under the directive on the recruitment, employment, and administration of election officers issued in accordance with Proclamation No. 1394/2025, the Board determines constituency staffing, including reserves, by reference to workload, voter volume, and the number of polling stations, and determines polling-station staffing by reference to station workload and voter density. The standard is four election officers per station for the voter registration phase and a minimum of six per station for voting and counting, scaling upward with the number of registered voters, and each officer team must include at least one female member.⁴⁸ Recruitment for the cycle ran from 27 October 2025 to 17 January 2026, and the resulting lists were circulated to political parties for comment in two rounds between 9 December 2025 and 27 January 2026, as a confidence-building mechanism.

2.4. The Electorate and the Polling Station

For the seventh general election, the Board utilized three modalities for voter registration. First, consistent with previous elections, the Board maintained a manual registration modality, conducted directly by designated electoral officers on site at the polling stations. Second, the Board introduced a self registration mechanism via the “Mirchaye” mobile application or the web registration portal (accessible via computer, laptop, or smartphone). Third, Assisted Voter Registration modality was deployed. Under this approach, voters presented themselves at the polling stations, where election officers processed their registration through a digital platform using the Board’s tablets.⁴⁹

Through the combined implementation of these modalities, the Board reported 54,057,861 registered voters for the Seventh General Election, of whom more than 5.5 million registered through the digital self-registration channel and the remainder through assisted digital or manual registration. Women accounted for approximately 46 % of the register and men for approximately

⁴⁸ National Election Board of Ethiopia. (2025). የምርጫ አስፈጻሚ ሰራተኞች ምልመላ፣ ቅጥር እና አስተዳደር መመሪያ [Directive on the recruitment, employment, and administration of election officers]. NEBE.

⁴⁹ National Election Board of Ethiopia. (2026, January 6). *NEBE inaugurates the first of its kind voter and candidate registration system*. <https://nebe.org.et/en/node/1222>

54 %. Of those registered, 51,734,193 cast ballots, a turnout of 95 %, with 51,705,279 ballot papers used and 320,781 put out of use. These figures, other than the number of registered voters, exclude the constituencies undergoing recounts and re-elections, and they exclude altogether the deferred Tigray region. The seventh cycle also provided for the separate registration of groups that had no dedicated registration arrangement in the Sixth General Election. Pursuant to Article 17 of Proclamation No. 1162/2019, the Board instituted special polling arrangements for military personnel residing in camps, students in higher education institutions, and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Through this process, 126,498 military personnel in camps and 28,632 IDPs were registered, while 20,122 students in higher education institutions registered via the digital self registration mechanism. Voting for military personnel and IDPs took place on June 9, distinct from the general voting held on June 1. This was facilitated by establishing 442 polling stations within military camps and 82 polling stations within IDP camps, whereas student voting was administered utilizing standard voting procedures. These specific measures represent a developmental shift from the Sixth General Election, which did not incorporate specialized voting mechanisms for military personnel. Furthermore, while special arrangements for IDPs were absent during the initial June voting of the Sixth General Election, such accommodations were progressively implemented during the subsequent outstanding and re-elections.⁵⁰

The Board's planning dataset for the seventh cycle lists 52,751 planned polling stations across 547 constituencies, an increase of 3,344 stations on the 49,407 planned for the Sixth General Election. The Board's operational figure for the election itself is 51,026 established polling stations. Of the planned stations, 16,782, or 31.8 %, were designated as technology-enabled sites at which digital voter self-registration was available, and 35,681, or roughly two-thirds, carried GPS coordinates alongside a standardized 13-digit polling station code. Electoral operations were ultimately not conducted in 46 constituencies, comprising the 38 constituencies of the Tigray region and 8 constituencies of the Amhara region.⁵¹

2.5. Digital Systems Introduced for the Seventh Cycle

The Board has innovated its registration mechanisms through the integration of digital technology. Guided by Proclamation No. 1394/2025, a Proclamation to Amend the Ethiopian Electoral, Political Parties Registration and Election's Code of Conduct, the Board is now legally authorized to transition from voter registration conducted exclusively at polling stations to utilizing advanced technological alternatives. Specifically, by adding a new article (Article 161)

⁵⁰ Fana Media Corporation. (2026, June 9). ከኢትዮጵያ ብሔራዊ ምርጫ ቦርድ የተሰጠ መግለጫ [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/live/owSiGSwnp2Y>

⁵¹ Ethiopia Observer. (2026, May 26). Elections will not be held in 46 constituencies across the Amhara and Tigray regions. Ethiopia Observer. <https://www.ethiopiaobserver.com/2026/05/26/elections-will-not-be-held-in-46-constituencies-across-the-amhara-and-tigray-regions/>; Capital Ethiopia. (2026, June 3). African Union flags security concerns after polling suspended in 46 constituencies across Tigray and Amhara. Capital Ethiopia. <https://capitalethiopia.com/2026/06/03/african-union-flags-security-concerns-after-polling-suspended-in-46-constituencies-across-tigray-and-amhara/>

to the principal Proclamation No. 1162/2019, the Board can implement technology for electoral functions, including voter and candidate registration.

On 5 January 2026 the Board inaugurated the Mirchaye voter registration platform, comprising a Voter Self-Registration component and an assisted registration system managed by election officers at polling stations, together with a separate digital Candidate Registration System. Both were made available in six languages and were developed through consultations with Board experts, political parties, civil society organizations, media, and associations of persons with disabilities. The Board emphasized that, despite digital registration, the election would not use electronic voting.⁵²

The systems rest on the Fayda national digital identity program. Possession of a Fayda National ID is compulsory for citizens opting for digital self-registration, and all candidates, whether standing for a party or as independents, are required to verify their identity through Fayda, which makes possession of a national digital ID a legal prerequisite for candidacy. The assisted registration modality, by contrast, accommodates voters whether or not they hold a national ID. The Board is obliged to make the candidate portal accessible to persons with disabilities and users with special needs, to implement data encryption, two-factor authentication, and restricted access permissions, and to train parties and stakeholders in the portal's use.

2.6. Accreditation of Electoral Stakeholders

The Board opened the administration of the election to independent scrutiny through accreditation on four tracks. It accredited 169 civil society organizations to provide voter and civic education, a figure raised from an initial 143, and 55 to conduct election observation, raised from an initial 45. The accredited observer organizations collectively obtained accreditation for 65,299 domestic observers; the number actually deployed is not established in the public record, and CECOE therefore reports the accredited figure rather than a deployment figure. Following a public call issued on 12 January 2026, more than 1,100 journalists from 37 media institutions were accredited to cover the process. International observation missions were accredited from the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development. Candidate agents were accredited through the constituency structure under Articles 14 to 16 of Proclamation No. 1162/2019.

2.7. Budget and Operating Conditions

The reported election budget of approximately 11 billion birr for 54,057,861 registered voters amounts to roughly 204 birr per registered voter. Comparable to African states, including Kenya and Nigeria, on a per-registered-voter basis the budget allocation for Ethiopia is considerably small. Of the statutory financial support owed to political parties, the Board distributed 170

⁵² National Election Board of Ethiopia. (2026, January 6). NEBE inaugurates first of its kind voter and candidate registration system. NEBE. <https://nebe.org.et/en/node/1222>

million birr, releasing only the first 30 % tranche of the regular annual allocation, with the remaining 70 % and the second installment still pending at the time of reporting. The Board's Chairperson attributed the shortfall to budget constraints and stated that the Board had done everything it could to disburse support to parties. Several parties described the distribution formula as non-transparent.⁵³

⁵³ The Reporter Ethiopia. (2026, May 30). Ethiopia heads to seventh election amid unsettled debates over security, fairness. The Reporter Ethiopia. <https://www.thereporterethiopia.com/50930/>

CHAPTER 3: LEGAL CONTEXT

Ethiopia's Seventh General Election was governed by a legal architecture anchored in the 1995 Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE), which guarantees the right of every national to vote and to be elected (Article 38), vests the conduct of elections in an impartial National Election Board (Article 102), and assigns the determination of electoral constituencies to the House of Federation on the basis of census results and a Board proposal (Article 103(5)).⁵⁴ Below this constitutional layer sit the post-2018 reform statutes the NEBE Establishment Proclamation No. 1133/2019, the Electoral, Political Parties Registration and Elections Code of Conduct Proclamation No. 1162/2019, the Media Proclamation No. 1238/2021, and the Civil Society Organizations Proclamation No. 1113/2019 together with the directives issued by NEBE.⁵⁵ Each of these instruments was amended or contested in the run-up to the 2026 vote: the electoral code was revised by the Amended Electoral Law Proclamation No. 1394/2025, the Media Proclamation was amended in April 2025, and draft amendments to the CSO Proclamation circulated from mid-2025.⁵⁶ The cumulative effect was mixed inclusion gains in the electoral code coexisted with regression in the media and civil society frameworks.

3.1. Electoral Legal Reform

Proclamation No. 1133/2019 re-established NEBE as an independent institution accountable to the HoPR, with a transparent, committee-based nomination procedure for Board members (analyzed in Section 5.1.1) and the power to issue implementing directives. Proclamation No. 1162/2019 consolidated the previously fragmented electoral code into a single instrument regulating voter and candidate registration, party formation and obligations, constituency arrangements, campaign conduct and finance, media access, observation, and dispute resolution, with the stated ambition of meeting international election standards.⁵⁷

In July 2025, Parliament adopted the Amended Electoral Law Proclamation No. 1394/2025, revising 26 articles of Proclamation No. 1162/2019.⁵⁸ On the positive side of the ledger, the amendment removed several systemic barriers to participation. Age eligibility for both voters and candidates is now determined by their age on polling day. Citizens who turn 18 by election day can register to vote, and those turning 21 can run as candidates, opening the democratic

⁵⁴ Amended Electoral Law Proclamation No. 1394/2025, Federal Negarit Gazeta (2025).

⁵⁵ National Electoral Board of Ethiopia Establishment Proclamation No. 1133/2019, Federal Negarit Gazeta (2019); Ethiopian Electoral, Political Parties Registration and Election's Code of Conduct Proclamation No. 1162/2019, Federal Negarit Gazeta (2019).

<https://nebe.org.et/sites/default/files/Ethiopian-Electoral-Proclamation-No-1162.pdf>

⁵⁶ Amended Electoral Law Proclamation No. 1394/2025, Federal Negarit Gazeta (2025).

⁵⁷ Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Proclamation No. 1/1995, art. 103(5), Federal Negarit Gazeta (1995); Ethiopian Electoral, Political Parties Registration and Elections Code of Conduct Proclamation No. 1162/2019, Federal Negarit Gazeta (2019).

<https://nebe.org.et/sites/default/files/Ethiopian-Electoral-Proclamation-No-1162.pdf>

⁵⁸ Media Proclamation No. 1238/2021, Federal Negarit Gazeta (2021).

process to first-time voters and young candidates previously excluded by cut-off dates. The required number of supporting signatures was significantly reduced for women candidates and candidates with disabilities, a deliberate effort to dismantle systemic obstacles to the participation of marginalized groups. Civil servants who stand for election are now entitled to paid rather than unpaid leave, removing a financial disincentive to candidacy.

The amendment also strengthened election administration and dispute resolution. To address the shortage of election officers witnessed in past elections, NEBE was granted authority to assign officials flexibly according to the specific needs of polling stations. Under the restructured complaint handling framework, the former grievance hearing committee at the polling station level has been dissolved, allowing complaints to be submitted directly to the polling station head. Meanwhile, the process has been restructured at the constituency level around a new three-member grievance hearing committee. Chaired by the head of the constituency, this higher-level committee includes two publicly elected members whose selection mandates gender balance, non-partisanship, and a proven record of good conduct. The amendment further prohibited any political party from deducting membership contributions or other financial support from the salaries or allowances of civil servants and public enterprise employees through government payment systems closing a channel through which incumbency advantage had previously operated.

The controversial element of Proclamation No. 1394/2025 is the expansion of NEBE's sanctioning power. The Board may now suspend a political party for up to five years before formally moving to revoke its registration. A suspended party is prohibited from engaging in any political activity, cannot participate in elections at any level, is excluded from the joint council of political parties, and is ineligible for government support. Although an aggrieved party may appeal to the Federal High Court, opposition parties expressed concern that a five-year suspension is functionally equivalent to dissolution across a full electoral cycle. The second contested change realigned the requirements for national party status with the post-2019 federal map: a national party must now collect 60 % of its supporting signatures from at least six regional states and maintain organized membership structures in those regions a change debated in Parliament, where members questioned both its practicality in the prevailing security environment and the adequacy of the public consultation that preceded it. NEBE conducted two rounds of consultations with political parties and media leaders on the draft amendments in early 2025; nonetheless, some parliamentarians and party representatives stated that suggestions raised in public forums were not reflected in the final text, a transparency gap that CECOE considers material to the legitimacy of electoral rule-making.

CECOE further notes that the constitutional and statutory framework for constituency delimitation remained unreformed despite the well-documented obsolescence of the 1994 boundaries. The tension between the Constitution's mandatory language the House of Federation "shall" determine constituencies on the basis of census results and the Proclamation's permissive

language that constituencies “may” be rearranged based on census results persisted into the 2026 cycle, leaving revision a matter of discretion rather than obligation.⁵⁹

3.2. Media Legal Reform

The Media Proclamation No. 1238/2021 had been one of the flagship achievements of the post-2018 reform period, replacing a more restrictive press regime, decriminalizing aspects of media activity, and establishing a reconstituted Ethiopian Media Authority (EMA) with a governance board intended to insulate licensing decisions from executive control.⁶⁰ In April 2025 fourteen months before polling day Parliament adopted the new amendment. The amendment repealed Article 17(1), under which the EMA Director-General was appointed by the House of Peoples’ Representatives; the Director-General is now nominated by the Prime Minister and not by the board. It removed Article 11(6), which had barred members or employees of political parties from sitting on the EMA board. It repealed Articles 9(1) and 9(2), which required board members to be appointed “in an open and transparent manner” through a process involving public nomination, a published shortlist, and fair representation of Ethiopia’s diversity. It replaced Article 9(5)(a) which had guaranteed two board seats each for civil society, the media sector, and other relevant institutions with an unspecified formula of “representatives from different bodies relevant to the media.”

3.3. Civil Society Legal Reform

The Civil Society Organizations Proclamation No. 1113/2019 replaced the repressive 2009 Charities and Societies Proclamation, lifted the foreign-funding cap that had crippled rights-based work, permitted domestic and international CSOs to engage in advocacy and election-related activity, and established the Authority for Civil Society Organizations (ACSO) as regulator. This reform enabled the emergence of coalitions such as CECOE itself and underpinned the accreditation of 224 civil society organizations for the 2026 electoral cycle, 169 for voter education and 55 for election observation.^{61,62}

The durability of this framework came under strain in the pre-electoral period. In June–July 2025, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) circulated a draft to amend Proclamation No. 1113/2019; following a stakeholder notification meeting and presentations by ACSO and the MoJ, a revised draft was made public.⁶³ First, the draft restructures the CSO governing board so that five of its

⁵⁹ African Union. (2007). African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, art. 2(3). African Union Commission.

<https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36384-treaty-african-charter-on-democracy-and-governance.pdf>

⁶⁰ Organizations of Civil Societies Proclamation No. 1113/2019, Federal Negarit Gazeta (2019).

⁶¹ Ministry of Justice. (2025). Draft proclamation to amend the Organizations of Civil Societies Proclamation No. 1113/2019 [Draft legislation]. Ministry of Justice of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

⁶² Ethiopian Reporter. (2025). የሲቪል ማህበረሰብ ድርጅቶች ረቂቅ ማሻሻያ አዋጅ ከምርጫ በፊት አንዳይፀድቅ ተጠየቀ [Call for the draft civil society amendment proclamation not to be adopted before the election]. Ethiopian Reporter. <https://ethiopianreporter.com/152773>

⁶³ National Election Board of Ethiopia. (2020–2021). Directives No. 2/2020 to No. 7/2021 [Subsidiary legislation issued under Proclamations No. 1133/2019 and No. 1162/2019]. NEBE.

seven members, including the chairperson, are appointed directly by the MoJ, giving the executive a controlling majority on the oversight body. Second, it empowers the authority to suspend or dissolve organizations deemed a *“threat to national security”* a term left without legal definition without independent judicial oversight. Third, it introduces stringent operational and financial controls: administrative sanctions ranging from suspension to license revocation for minor or vaguely defined infractions (such as failure to update an office address or delays in financial reporting), a requirement to report all funding within fifteen days, and the possibility of bank-account freezes during investigations burdens that fall hardest on small and emerging CSOs. Fourth, it creates a financial restriction by prohibiting foreign funding for CSOs engaged in voter education, citizen election observation, political advocacy, and other similar activities. Fifth, the draft eliminates judicial appeal altogether, making the board the final authority over disputes and sanctions, denying CSOs an independent check against abuse of administrative power.

In response to domestic and international criticism, a subsequent draft relaxed the comprehensive ban on foreign funding. Instead, the updated draft mandates that CSOs involved in voter education or election observation secure a letter of support from the ACSO prior to beginning operations. This requirement establishes an executive-controlled secondary hurdle preceding the Board's accreditation even though NEBE holds the exclusive legal authority to accredit and authorize such initiatives. Meanwhile, other contentious provisions, including those expanding reporting requirements, weakening judicial appeals, and reducing civil society representation on the oversight board, continued to be debated as of late 2025. The draft amendments created a climate of legal uncertainty for CSOs.⁶⁴

On a positive note, compared to the severely restrictive initial draft, the latest draft removes several contentious provisions, such as vague national security restrictions and foreign funding limits on political advocacy, election observation, and voter education. Striking these clauses, helps safeguard the financial viability of domestic observers, prevents arbitrary state intervention, and respects the National Election Board of Ethiopia's (NEBE) exclusive authority over accreditation, even though executive pre-conditions like requiring support letters from the Authority for Civil Society Organizations (ACSO) remain.

However, the draft retains structural flaws that undermine civic freedom and regulatory independence. Granting the Ministry of Justice a controlling majority on the CSO governing board puts state authorities in direct command of civil society oversight, while eliminating judicial review deprives organizations of the right to appeal administrative suspensions or dissolutions in court.

⁶⁴ National Election Board of Ethiopia. (2025). ለፖለቲካ ፓርቲዎች እና የግል አጠቃቀሞች የሚሰጠውን ድጋፍ ለመወሰን የወጣ መመሪያ [Directive on determining the support provided to political parties and independent candidates]. NEBE.

3.4. NEBE Directives

This section focuses on the new developments in NEBE's subsidiary legislation since the Sixth General Election. Directives carried over unchanged from the previous cycle are noted only for context. Proclamations No. 1133/2019 and 1162/2019 empower NEBE to issue implementing directives, and the Board has built a substantial body of subsidiary legislation since 2020. The directives most relevant to the seventh cycle are six in number. Directive No. 2/2020 governs the code of conduct for mass media and journalists reporting on elections. Directive No. 3/2020 sets out the obligations of registered national and regional parties. Directive No. 4/2020 governs voter-education accreditation and the accompanying code of conduct. Directive No. 5/2020 governs the accreditation, working procedures, and code of conduct of local election observers. Directive No. 6/2021 governs voter registration, and Directive No. 7/2021 governs candidate registration, the collection of endorsement signatures, and the selection of symbols.⁶⁵ For the special constituencies reserved for minority nationalities, NEBE's 2021 Implementation Framework for Voter Registration in Special Constituencies adopted a self-identification method for registering voters, acknowledging the practical difficulty of ascertaining ethnic eligibility.

Ahead of the 2026 vote, the Board substantially updated this framework. It consulted political parties on, and then adopted, a revised Election Code of Conduct directive comprising seven chapters and thirty articles, signed by all 48 registered parties at a public ceremony in early 2026.

Directive on Support to Political Parties and Independent Candidates

The revised Directive on Support to Political Parties and Independent Candidates extends the support scheme to independent candidates explicitly stating the amount receivable by each independent candidate.⁶⁶ In allocating in-kind support, the directive prioritizes newly established parties (two years old or less) with substantial membership and office networks, parties with women and persons with disabilities among their members or leadership, and parties that used the previous year's budget for its intended purpose and submitted timely audit reports. Electronic devices provided by the Board (laptops, printers, tablets) must be returned after the campaign period. Beyond financial support, parties are entitled to training and to free public transportation for supporters attending rallies, in collaboration with government administrative units. The funding criteria deliberately apply an intersectional lens: the number of women and PWD candidates counts toward both annual and election-period fund distribution, and independent candidates receive additional allocations above the base grant of ETB 200,000 25 % for women, 35 % for women with disabilities, and 15 % for candidates with disabilities. Parties or candidates dissatisfied with the Board's funding decisions may appeal to the Federal High Court.

⁶⁵ National Election Board of Ethiopia. (2025). የአጭቃች ምዝገባ፣ የድጋፍ ፊርማ አሰባሰብ እና መለያ ምልክት አመራረጥ መመሪያ [Directive on candidate registration, the collection of endorsement signatures, and the selection of symbols]. NEBE.

⁶⁶ National Election Board of Ethiopia. (2025). የፖለቲካ ፓርቲዎች እና የግል አጭ ተወዳዳሪዎች የመገናኛ ብዙኃን አጠቃቀምና ድልድል መመሪያ [Directive on media use and allocation for political parties and independent candidates]. NEBE.

Digital Candidate Registration

The new Directive on Candidate Registration codifies the digital candidate registration portal.⁶⁷ The directive obliges NEBE to make the portal accessible to persons with disabilities and users with special needs, and requires all candidates party and independent to verify their identity through the Fayda digital ID system, making possession of a national digital ID a legal prerequisite for candidacy. The Board must implement data encryption, two-factor authentication, and restricted access permissions, and must train parties and stakeholders in the portal's use. Party system administrators enter candidate data drawn from the digital ID database; the Board's Chairperson approves or rejects each registration, with approved candidates receiving a digital candidacy certificate by email and SMS, and rejected applicants receiving reasoned legal and technical feedback with the right to re-apply before the registration deadline. CECOE's assessment is that the directive framework is comparatively comprehensive by regional standards, but that its rapid evolution during the electoral year particularly the introduction of digital prerequisites with legal effect on candidacy outpaced the capacity of smaller parties and rural registrants, with consequences.

Media Access and Airtime Allocation

NEBE also enacted a directive aimed at ensuring a fair electoral process by establishing clear criteria for the allocation of free airtime and free newspaper columns, ensuring that competing political parties or independent candidates receive equitable media coverage for their campaign messages, and by enacting a system through which voters obtain sufficient information to cast their votes.⁶⁸ A joint committee consisting of three representatives from NEBE and two from Media Authority is established with a mandate to prepare the airtime and newspaper column allocation formula, execute the allocation, and respond to complaints submitted by political parties, independent candidates, and the media during the implementation process of the directive. In determining the allocation of total media airtime and newspaper columns for political party campaign broadcasts, the joint committee takes into account multiple criteria to support fair access. These factors comprise equitable utilization among parties, the total number of candidates registered for Federal and Regional Councils by the party, party's overall count of female candidates, as well as the number of candidates with disabilities (PWDs) and female candidates with disabilities. Before the overall airtime assigned to political parties is distributed, the joint committee shall decide the proportion that will be allocated to independent candidates from the same collective airtime and newspaper columns.

Complete accountability for the substance of any broadcast program or published statement rests with the independent candidate or political party allocated free airtime or newspaper columns.

⁶⁷ National Election Board of Ethiopia. (2025). በምርጫ ሂደት በየደረጃው ስለሚኖር አቤቱታ አቀራረብ፣ አቤቱታ ሰሚ አካላት እደረጃጀት እና አሰራር መመሪያ [Directive on the grievance hearing procedure and the organization and operations of grievance hearing bodies at all levels of the electoral process]. NEBE.

⁶⁸ National Election Board of Ethiopia. (2025). ዲጂታል የመረጫ ምዝገባ መመሪያ [Digital voter registration directive]. NEBE.

Furthermore, election campaign communications are strictly prohibited from overtly or covertly promoting or inciting conflict and violence. Such messages must also exclude any material that generates intimidation or harassment and must refrain from disseminating false information. The schedule or sequence of airtime and newspaper columns through which election campaign messages are transmitted shall be determined by a lottery draw.

Grievance Resolution and Dispute Handling

Under the new framework established by Proclamation 1394/2025, the organization of the grievance hearing committee has been updated.⁶⁹ The head of the polling station is tasked with the reception, investigation, and resolution of grievances submitted at the station level. To ensure impartiality throughout the dispute resolution process, the polling station head must execute a formal conflict of interest disclosure. Should a conflict be identified, the head is required to recuse themselves from the evaluation, and the grievance must be immediately escalated to the constituency level for review. Furthermore, any complainant who believes that valid grounds for a conflict exist under this directive holds the right to formally apply for the recusal of either the polling station head or the specific grievance hearing committee member in question. The directive outlines specific timelines for respective grievance hearing committees to address and resolve different complaints, including those initially determined by a polling station head. Additionally, any individual or party dissatisfied with a committee's decision preserves their right to appeal to successive levels, up to and including the courts.

Election Officer Administration

The Board also issued a directive for the recruitment, employment, determination of numbers, and administration of election officers at polling station and constituency level in accordance with Proclamation No. 1394/2025.⁷⁰ To ensure efficient administration, the Board determines the staffing size for constituency level (including reserves) by evaluating factors, including the constituency's workload, voter volume, the total number of polling stations, and other relevant variables. Similarly, the number of election officers assigned to each polling station is determined based on specific station workloads and voter density. Standard protocol requires the Board to assign four election officers to each polling station for the voter registration phase, unless exceptional conditions justify an alternative arrangement. For the subsequent voting and counting phases, a minimum of six election officers must be deployed per station, with exact numbers scaling alongside the volume of registered voters. In line with gender equity mandates, each officer team must include at least one female member. Furthermore, the governing directive

⁶⁹ Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Proclamation No. 1/1995, art. 102(2), Federal Negarit Gazeta (1995); National Electoral Board of Ethiopia Establishment Proclamation No. 1133/2019, art. 5(1)–(2), Federal Negarit Gazeta (2019).

<https://lawethiopia.com/index.php/legislation/federal-legislation/election>

⁷⁰ National Electoral Board of Ethiopia Establishment Proclamation No. 1133/2019, arts. 5(3)–(8), 6, 12, Federal Negarit Gazeta (2019). <https://lawethiopia.com/index.php/legislation/federal-legislation/election>

defines the essential qualifications required for individuals serving as election officers at both the constituency and polling station levels.

Digital Voter Registration Framework

To operationalize digital voter registration, NEBE enacted a specific directive. This directive outlines the required documentation, procedures for digital platforms, and responsibilities of respective election officers.⁷¹ The directive establishes two distinct registration methods: self-registration, enabling eligible citizens to enroll independently via NEBE's official website or mobile application, and assisted digital registration, which takes place at polling stations with the guidance of election officials. While possessing a Fayda National ID is compulsory for individuals opting for self-registration, the assisted modality accommodates voters regardless of whether they hold a National ID. Furthermore, the National ID is formally recognized as an acceptable credential for identity verification.

⁷¹ Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations for Elections. (2024). Monitoring report on the nomination, selection, and appointment process for the new Chairperson of the National Election Board of Ethiopia. CECOE. <https://cecoe.org/download/assessment-of-the-appointment-process-of-the-nebe-chairperson/>

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY OF OBSERVATION AND LIMITATIONS

This chapter describes the methodology CECOE employed to observe the Seventh General Election and the limitations under which the observation was conducted. It sets out CECOE's overall approach and the recruitment, training, and accreditation of its observers. It then describes the long-term observation, including the observation of voter registration and a dedicated civic space scan, the stationary and mobile observation conducted on election day, and the post-election observation. Finally, it sets out the arrangements for critical incident reporting and verification and for data management and quality control, before turning to the territorial and operational constraints that qualify the findings.

4.1. Election Observation Methodology

For the Seventh General Election of Ethiopia, CECOE deployed trained and accredited citizen observers in all Ethiopian regions and city administrations except the Tigray region and the five contested constituencies of Humera, Adi Remets, Korem Afla, Telemt, and Raya Alamata, where electoral operations were deferred or not conducted. CECOE employed a pre-election, election-day, and post-election observation methodology in order to assess the electoral process against NEBE standards and against the standards and practices for democratic elections. This approach stems from CECOE's conviction that an election is a process rather than a single event on voting day. In observing the full cycle, CECOE pursued two objectives. The first was to contribute to the inclusiveness, transparency, and accountability of the electoral process. The second was to provide citizens, electoral stakeholders, and the wider public with systematic, impartial, and verifiable information on the conduct of the process at every stage.

Citizen observation groups use different methodologies to implement election observation activities. Building on the lessons of its observation of the Sixth National and Regional Elections, in which CECOE deployed more than 3,000 observers using a propositional methodology. These comprised long-term observation of the pre-election environment, systematic observation of voter registration, a dedicated civic space scan, stationary and mobile observation on election day, and long-term observation of the post-election environment carried out by the same network of long-term observers. Each observation methodology has its own strengths and serves to complement the others.

4.2. Observer Recruitment, Training, and Accreditation

For the seventh cycle, all observers were recruited through CECOE's network. Out of 190 member civil society organizations spanning the country, 101 participated in the recruitment process. This strategy ensured that observers were drawn from, and deployed in, their own communities. Recruitment was governed by criteria designed to secure the impartiality on which the credibility of citizen observation depends. Every prospective observer was required to be a citizen of voting age who held no office in, and was not a candidate or agent of, any political party, and who had no role in the election administration. Each was required to sign the observer

code of conduct, which binds observers to political neutrality, to the reporting of what they observe rather than what they infer, and to abstention from any conduct that could be construed as interference in the process. Member organizations screened nominees against these criteria before submitting them, and the Secretariat the submissions before accreditation was sought. Before deployment, every observer was trained on the electoral legal framework, the observer code of conduct, and CECOE's standardized checklists and reporting protocols, with the instruction to collect and document factual, independent, and objective information on the processes they observed. Observers were deployed only after obtaining accreditation from the National Election Board of Ethiopia.

Recruitment and operational management are handled through CECOE's Digital Election Observation Workspace (DEOW). This centralized digital workspace coordinates the entire observer lifecycle, digitizing recruitment workflows, hosting interactive training modules, NEBE accreditation, managing deployments, and issuing final certifications. Field reporting is then conducted via Apollo, the platform where observers submit checklists and critical incident reports. The system routes every form directly to CECOE's central data center, automatically time-stamping and tagging it to the specific observer, constituency, and polling station code. This allows the data team to detect incomplete or anomalous submissions in near real-time, route critical incident reports instantly into the verification workflow, and easily cross-reference reports from different observers covering the same locality.

Table 1: Observers by phase, gender, and region

Region	Pre-election			Election day			Post-election		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
Oromia	45	106	161	437	861	1,299	45	106	161
Amhara	56	74	134	259	313	575	56	74	134
South Ethiopia	9	42	53	94	246	340	9	42	53
Central Ethiopia	6	26	34	75	188	263	6	26	34
Somali	5	26	42	41	187	228	5	26	42
Sidama	4	13	19	65	142	207	4	13	19
Addis Ababa	12	9	24	62	89	168	12	9	24
South West Ethiopia	4	16	21	55	93	148	4	16	21
Afar	1	6	9	16	72	88	1	6	9

Benishangu I-Gumuz	4	10	16	19	44	63	4	10	16
Gambella	1	3	5	8	36	45	1	3	5
Harari	0	2	2	17	10	27	0	2	2
Dire Dawa	0	2	2	16	10	26	0	2	2
Total	147	335	522	1,164	2,291	3,477	147	335	522

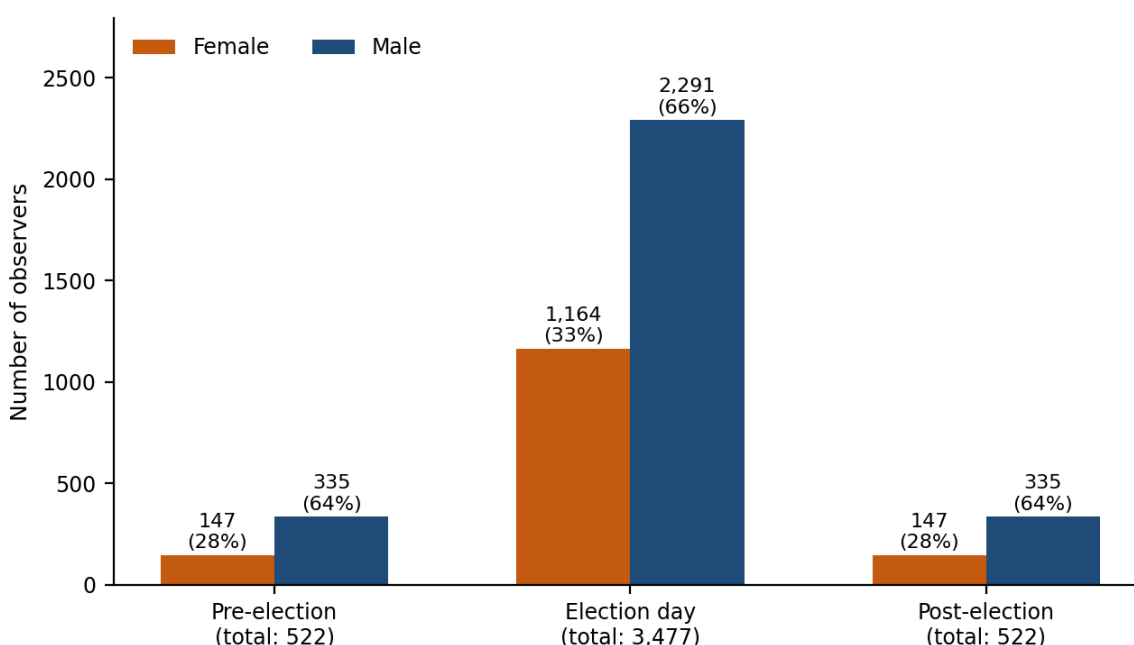


Figure 1: Gender composition of reporting observers by phase

4.3. Long-Term (Pre-Election) Observation

For its pre-election observation, CECOE deployed 522 long-term observers (LTOs) across all electoral constituencies except the Tigray region, covering the period from 21 March 2026 to 31 May 2026. One observer was deployed per constituency regardless of its size, with observers stationed mainly in urban and semi-urban areas. Using structured checklists, the long-term observers reported on the pre-election environment across seven thematic areas. These were voter education, campaign activities, candidate debates, false, inflammatory, and defamatory information, the electoral security environment, civic space, and bribery and vote-buying. Reporting was organized in five successive rounds over the observation period, and across the five rounds CECOE received a total of 6,072 observation reports on the pre-election environment.

4.4. Observation of Voter Registration

NEBE's official schedule initially set voter registration for 14 February to 14 March 2026, with digital self-registration opening on 23 January 2026. On 12 February 2026, the Board rescheduled the start of registration to 7 March 2026 in order to "finalize preparatory works," and on 4 April 2026 it extended the registration deadline to 22 April 2026, citing system interruptions, network coverage problems, and transport limitations. CECOIE's long-term observers monitored the registration process from its opening on 21 March 2026 to its close on 22 April 2026, systematically observing both the manual and the tablet-assisted (digital) registration processes.

Using standardized checklists, observers monitored five clusters of indicators. These were the setup and convenience of registration stations, the registration process itself, the participation and inclusiveness of different segments of society, the deployment and conduct of security forces, and violence against women in elections (VAWiE). CECOIE's registration observation covered 3,953 manual registration stations and 443 tablet-assisted registration stations. Findings on the punctuality of election officers were collected from a subset of these stations: 2,051 manual and 223 tablet stations observed during the morning shift, and 1,902 manual and 220 tablet stations during the afternoon shift.

4.5. Civic Space Scan

As part of its long-term observation, CECOIE conducted a dedicated civic space scan covering the period from 1 June 2025 to 15 June 2026. Trained civic space monitors systematically tracked and documented publicly reported events bearing on the exercise of fundamental freedoms, the rights to association and assembly and freedom of expression together with related developments in the election environment, election security, arrests and detentions, and civil society operations. Each event was recorded with its date, location, the actors involved, and the actions taken, and was against at least one publicly available source, including reports of domestic and international media, statements of political parties and of NEBE, and the reports of national and international human rights organizations, among them the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). In total, 179 events were documented over the scan period.

4.6. Election-Day Observation

Stationary Observation

CECOIE's stationary observers were present at their assigned polling stations from 5:30 a.m. and remained at a single station throughout the day, observing the setup and opening of the station, the voting process, the closing of the station, the vote counting process, and the official posting of results at the station level. Each stationary observer submitted five standardized process reports corresponding to these phases of the election day. Remaining in one polling station

throughout the day allows stationary observers to document the full conduct of the process at that station and provides the reliable data set on which the principal election-day statistics in this report are based: the findings are documented from the 2,506 polling stations where CECO's stationary observers were deployed for the full day.

Mobile Observation

Mobile observers, by contrast, do not remain in one polling station: their distinctive feature is roaming observation. In the context of the seventh cycle, each of CECO's mobile observers visited at least six polling stations on election day. Mobile observation provides information on the conduct of the election across a wider set of stations and, unlike stationary observation, also captures the election-day environment outside the polling stations. While the information mobile observers provide on any single station is typically anecdotal rather than representative, it substantially extends coverage and is the principal source, alongside stationary observers' reports, of the election-day critical incidents documented in this report.

Through its stationary and mobile observers combined, CECO covered 7,723 polling stations, or 15 % of the 51,026 polling stations established by NEBE.

4.7. Post-Election Observation

The post-election observation was carried out by the same network of 522 long-term observers deployed during the pre-election phase, who remained in their areas of assignment after election day and monitored the post-election environment using a standardized post-election checklist. The findings on post-election violence and protest presented in this report are drawn from the 395 reports that completed that module, and the findings on public opinion, media coverage, and the reaction of political contestants are drawn from the 395 reports that completed the corresponding modules.

4.8. Critical Incident Reporting and Verification

Throughout all phases of the observation, observers reported serious events violence, intimidation, obstruction of observers, ballot tampering, interference with the count, and comparable violations through dedicated critical incident report forms. Each incident report was subjected to a verification process by CECO's data and verification team, including call-backs to the reporting observer, cross-checking against other observer reports from the same locality, and, where applicable, corroboration against publicly available information. By the time this report was prepared, CECO had documented 56 distinct critical incidents from the pre-election period and more than 300 incident entries related to election day and its immediate aftermath, a portion of which remained under verification. Incident reports and checklist comments that had not completed verification are identified as such wherever they appear in this report, and CECO continues to verify incoming reports and to notify the relevant authorities.

4.9. Data Management and Quality Control

Observation data were transmitted from the field through CECO's reporting channels to the Coalition's central data center, which was staffed by 80 data clerks and data managers for eight days. The data team checked each submission for completeness and consistency, the information reported from the field, flagged anomalies and partial or missing reports for follow-up with the reporting observer, and compiled the cleaned data for analysis. %ages in this report are rounded to the nearest whole number, which may cause categories to total slightly more or less than 100 %.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of CECOE's observation across the three phases of the electoral cycle. It begins with the pre-election findings, which cover election administration, the selection of the Board, constituency delimitation, polling station establishment, the electoral calendar, party and candidate registration, accreditation, party and campaign finance, the civic space, voter education, campaigning, debates, the electoral security environment, and voter registration. It then presents the election-day findings drawn from the polling stations covered by CECOE's stationary and mobile observers. It closes with the post-election findings, which remain preliminary because the post-election observation was still under way at the time of writing, and with the critical incidents across all three phases.

5.1. Pre-Election Findings

5.1.1. Board Selection Process

Appointment of the NEBE Chairperson

Under Article 102(2) of the FDRE Constitution, members of NEBE's Management Board are appointed by the HoPR upon the recommendation of the Prime Minister, with the details supplied by Proclamation No. 1133/2019: the Prime Minister establishes an eight-member independent Nomination Committee drawing one representative each from the Inter-Religious Council, the Ethiopian Academy of Sciences, the Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions, the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce, and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, plus three members from civil society and respected elders, with proportional gender balance required among committee members.⁷² The Committee must recruit twice the number of vacant positions through a transparent and competitive process; the Prime Minister must then consult representatives of competing political parties before submitting to the HoPR a list corresponding to the vacancies. Board members serve a six-year term, renewable once.⁷³

The renewal of the Board's leadership began earlier, with the chairmanship itself. In June 2023, Chairperson Birtukan Mideksa whose November 2018 appointment had signaled hopes of restoring public trust in Ethiopia's electoral institutions, and under whose leadership NEBE

⁷² Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations for Elections. (2025, August). Monitoring report: Nomination, selection, and appointment process of the new members of the National Election Board of Ethiopia (pp. 6–7). CECOE.
<https://cecoe.org/download/monitoring-report-nomination-selection-and-appointment-process-of-the-new-members-of-the-national-election-board-of-ethiopia/>

⁷³ Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations for Elections. (2025, August). Monitoring report: Nomination, selection, and appointment process of the new members of the National Election Board of Ethiopia (pp. 7–8). CECOE.
<https://cecoe.org/download/monitoring-report-nomination-selection-and-appointment-process-of-the-new-members-of-the-national-election-board-of-ethiopia/>; Fana Broadcasting Corporate. (2025, May 22). Nomination committee announces six finalists [Video]. YouTube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30eTUMYWW2M>

executed the Sidama referendum, the Sixth General Elections, and the Southwest and South Ethiopia referendums announced her resignation, effective 7 August 2023. On 6 November 2023, the Prime Minister established an eight-member Recruitment Committee, chaired by Priest Tagay Tadele of the Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia, with members drawn from the Ethiopian Academy of Sciences, the Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions, the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, and civil society, as required by Article 5 of Proclamation No. 1133/2019. The Committee received 56 nominations from the public, political parties, and civil society during a nomination window of 13–23 November 2023, conducted three rounds of screening, shortlisted five individuals, and on 2 December 2023 announced two finalists Melatework Hailu and Tadesse Lemma selected for their track records, political neutrality, and fulfillment of the statutory criteria. On 12 December 2023, the House of Peoples' Representatives appointed Melatework Hailu as Chairperson of the NEBE.

CECOE closely monitored the chairperson appointment process and assessed it against the legal framework and the standards of transparency, inclusion, and participation.⁷⁴ On transparency, the establishment of the Committee, the nomination timeframe, and the shortlist were publicly announced, which is consistent with the principle. Three shortcomings nonetheless arose. The nomination modalities were one-way, giving citizens no confirmation that their submissions had been received. In-person submission was possible only at the office of the House of Peoples' Representatives in the capital, which disadvantaged citizens in the regions. And the screening and shortlisting stages proceeded without progress updates or publication of the nominees' names and profiles. On inclusion, only two of the eight Committee members were women, short of the proportional gender balance the Proclamation requires; only four of the 56 nominees were female; and the legal framework contains no provision guaranteeing representation of organizations of persons with disabilities. On participation, the Committee's composition complied with Article 5 and public nominations were invited within a designated timeframe. Against this, the chairperson of the Ethiopian Political Parties Joint Council publicly stated that the Prime Minister did not consult political parties as Article 5(6) requires, the time allocated for nominations was insufficient, and no platform existed through which the public could submit opinions or concerns on the process.

Appointment of the Deputy Chairperson and Board Members

The terms of the Deputy Chairperson and two Board members expired in June 2025, which triggered the first full application of this procedure since the initial post-reform appointments. On 26 March 2025 the Prime Minister established the Nomination Committee, chaired by Priest

⁷⁴ Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations for Elections. (2025, August). Monitoring report: Nomination, selection, and appointment process of the new members of the National Election Board of Ethiopia (Findings on composition and inclusion, p. 8). CECOE.
<https://cecoe.org/download/monitoring-report-nomination-selection-and-appointment-process-of-the-new-members-of-the-national-election-board-of-ethiopia/>

Tagay Tadele of the Inter-Religious Council. The Committee opened a public call for nominations from 9 to 29 April 2025 through multiple channels, namely email, WhatsApp, Telegram, postal mail, in-person submission, and, for the first time, a Google Form. More than 1,000 nominations were received and were reduced to 168 candidates after duplicates had been removed. Twelve candidates proceeded to final screening and nine were interviewed. On 22 May 2025 six finalists were publicly announced and referred to the Prime Minister, and on 12 June 2025 the House of Peoples' Representatives appointed Tesfaye Neway as Vice Chairperson and Nesim Ali, Teklit Yimesil, and Fikre Gebrehiwot as Board members.⁷⁵⁷⁶

CECOE's monitoring identified four principal findings. First, on composition and inclusion, the Committee's institutional make-up complied with Article 5 of the Proclamation, but the statutory requirement of proportional gender balance was not met: only two of the eight committee members were women. The appointees themselves reflect ethnic diversity, but their professional profile is dominated by the judiciary, whereas effective election management also requires expertise in public administration, statistics, and technology.⁷⁷ Second, on public participation, the multi-channel call and the engagement of civil society organizations such as TIMRAN, AWiB, and the Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations Council in mobilizing nominations marked an improvement in accessibility over previous rounds.⁷⁸ Third, on transparency, while the establishment of the Committee, the nomination window, and the shortlist were all publicly announced, the criteria and procedures used to narrow 168 candidates to 12, and then to 6, were never disclosed, a gap that leaves the most consequential stage of the process opaque. Fourth, the statutory consultation with political parties did occur: the Ethiopian Political Parties Joint Council confirmed receipt of a nomination request and consultations with a representative of the Prime Minister.⁷⁹

5.1.2. Constituency Delimitation

Like every general election since 1995, the Seventh General Election used constituency boundaries originally drawn for the 1994 Constituent Assembly election. Those boundaries were based on the 1984 census and a 1993 population projection of 53.5 million.⁸⁰ The 1994 delimitation created 547 constituencies (525 regular and 22 special constituencies for minority nationalities) using a standard size of roughly 100,000 people per constituency within a 50,000–150,000 band. Although the Constitution requires constituencies to be determined on the

⁷⁵ Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations for Elections. (2025, August). Monitoring report: Nomination, selection, and appointment process of the new members of the National Election Board of Ethiopia. CECO.

<https://cecoe.org/download/monitoring-report-nomination-selection-and-appointment-process-of-the-new-members-of-the-national-election-board-of-ethiopia/>

⁷⁶Ibid

⁷⁷Ibid

⁷⁸Ibid

⁷⁹Ibid

⁸⁰Ibid

basis of decennial census results, only one census has been conducted since 1994 (in 2007), and its results were never used to revise boundaries; a NEBE proposal to re-delimit on the 2007 census which would have implied one constituency per 141,000 people was rejected by the House of Federation amid opposition rooted in the politically sensitive redistribution of HoPR seats among regional states.⁸¹

The consequences for the principle of "one person, one vote, one value" are now severe. Applying the 2007 formula to the Ethiopian Statistics Service's 2024 population estimate of 109.5 million yields approximately 208,570 people per regular constituency about 2.5 times the original target and well above the 150,000 upper limit of the 1994 delimitation indicating structural malapportionment.⁸² Administrative boundary changes since 1994 have compounded the problem: referendums and re-organizations in Begi, Mieso, Wondo Genet, and Gazgibila Woredas, the split populations of Sodo, Dugeda, Eastern Badwacho, and Siraro, the creation of the Sidama, South West Ethiopia, South Ethiopia, and Central Ethiopia regions, and the recognition of the Kimant identity have all left voters in some localities casting ballots in constituencies administered from and in some cases seated in a different zone or regional state, contrary to the requirement of Article 13(1) of Proclamation No. 1162/2019 that constituencies not cross regional state boundaries.⁸³

The study also documents several structural weaknesses within the legal framework itself. First, the delimitation power rests with the House of Federation, a political chamber rather than an independent boundary authority. Second, the law mandates no public consultation, requiring only that the final constituency list be announced 180 days before candidate registration. Furthermore, the criteria by which the House of Federation determines which minority nationalities receive special constituencies have never been published. This lack of transparency has sparked controversies, such as in the West Omo Zone, where rotating a single regular seat among ordinary voters effectively disenfranchised non-indigenous residents. Finally, the deviation-management rule, which permits a maximum 15% average population deviation, has never been applied in practice.

5.1.3. Polling Station Establishment

CECOE compared the polling station arrangements established for the sixth and seventh general elections using NEBE's official publications and the underlying station-level datasets. For the sixth general election, NEBE established 49,407 polling stations nationwide across the regions in

⁸¹Ibid

⁸² National Election Board of Ethiopia. (2021). 6th General Election: List of constituencies and polling stations [Data set]. NEBE. https://nebe.org.et/am/6th_General_Election; National Election Board of Ethiopia. (2026). List of polling stations identified for the 7th General Election [Data set]. NEBE. https://nebe.org.et/am/List_of_polling_stations

⁸³ Ethiopian Electoral, Political Parties Registration and Election's Code of Conduct Proclamation No. 1162/2019, arts. 12–17, Federal Negarit Gazeta (2019). <https://nebe.org.et/sites/default/files/Ethiopian-Electoral-Proclamation-No-1162.pdf>

which elections were held; the seventh-election dataset records 52,751 planned polling stations, a net increase of 3,344 stations, or 6.8 %. Both arrangements operate under the legal framework of Articles 12–17 of Proclamation No. 1162/2019, which empower the Board to establish constituencies and polling stations and to create special polling stations for soldiers in camps, students in higher-education institutions, internally displaced persons, and eligible prisoners.⁸⁴

Three structural differences between the two arrangements stand out. First, and most significantly, the Seventh General Election plan reincorporated the Tigray Region which was wholly absent from the 2021 plan, allocating 38 HoPR constituencies and 2,648 planned polling stations. The subsequent indefinite deferment of voting in Tigray means that this planning did not translate into polling, but its inclusion in the baseline dataset reflects the Board's intent to restore the region to the electoral map. Excluding Tigray, the net national increase was a modest 696 stations, indicating consolidation rather than expansion in the rest of the country.⁸⁵ Second, the geography of change tracks the security landscape: Amhara's planned polling station list contracted from 12,956 to 12,021 stations (–935, or –7.2 %) and Addis Ababa's from 1,848 to 1,727 (–121), while Oromia's grew from 16,866 to 17,962 (+1,096), Afar's from 1,432 to 1,674 (+242), and South Ethiopia's from 3,576 to 3,913 (+337). Third, the constituency counts remained essentially frozen: 545 constituencies appeared in the sixth-election dataset and 547 in the seventh (the difference being Tigray's restoration net of minor administrative reclassifications) confirming that the polling station list was adjusted within unchanged 1994 boundaries rather than through re-delimitation.

Table 2: Planned polling stations by region, 6th vs. 7th General Elections

Region	6th GE (2021)	7th GE (2026)	Change
Oromia	16,866	17,962	+1,096
Amhara	12,956	12,021	–935
Somali	4,057	4,040	–17
South Ethiopia	3,576	3,913	+337
Central Ethiopia	2,909	2,946	+37
Tigray	(no election)	2,648	+2,648
Sidama	2,247	2,251	+4
Addis Ababa	1,848	1,727	–121

⁸⁴ Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations for Elections. (2025, November 25). Electoral constituency arrangements for Ethiopia's House of Peoples' Representatives: The impact of administration boundary changes and absence of population census (pp. 27–28). CECOE.

<https://cecoe.org/download/electoral-constituency-arrangements-for-ethiopias-house-of-peoples-representatives-the-impact-of-administration-boundary-changes-and-absence-of-population-census/>

⁸⁵ National Election Board of Ethiopia. (2026). List of polling stations at which digital voter registration will be conducted for the 7th General Election [Data set]. NEBE. https://nebe.org.et/am/List_of_polling_stations

South West Ethiopia	1,796	1,782	-14
Afar	1,432	1,674	+242
Benishangul-Gumuz	699	752	+53
Gambella	431	443	+12
Dire Dawa	305	287	-18
Harari	285	305	+20
Total	49,407	52,751	+3,344

The average number of polling stations per HoPR constituency rose from 90.7 in 2021 to 96.3 in 2026, a densification consistent with population growth in the absence of boundary revision: because constituencies cannot legally multiply, voter growth must be absorbed by adding stations within them. This is an administratively rational adaptation, but it does not remedy and arguably masks the malapportionment, since a vote in an over-populated constituency carries less weight regardless of how conveniently it can be cast.⁸⁶

The seventh-election dataset also reveals two administrative innovations. First, every planned station carries a standardized 13-digit polling station code and, for roughly two-thirds of stations (35,681 of 52,751), GPS coordinates a substantial improvement in the transparency and auditability of the network, and a foundation for the geographic information systems that boundary revision will eventually require. Second, NEBE designated 16,782 stations (31.8 %) as technology-enabled ("Tech based PS") sites at which digital voter self-registration through the Mirchaye platform was available; the Board published the region-by-region lists of these stations for Addis Ababa, Amhara, Dire Dawa, Oromia, Sidama, Somali, South Ethiopia, and Central Ethiopia.⁸⁷ Technology-enabled stations were distributed to 100% of the stations in Addis Ababa, as well as to locations in Central and South Ethiopia and urban Oromia.⁸⁸

Finally, the comparison must be read against the operational reality of both cycles. In 2021, 13,062 of the 49,407 planned stations (26.4%) did not operate on the main June 21 polling day. This was chiefly due to delayed voting in SNNP, Harari, and parts of Somali and Benishangul-Gumuz which instead voted in the September 30 second round alongside

⁸⁶ Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations for Elections. (2026). CECOE analysis of the NEBE 6th General Election dataset, 21 June election indicator [Unpublished analysis]. CECOE; National Election Board of Ethiopia. (2021). 6th General Election polling station lists [Data set]. NEBE. https://nebe.org.et/am/6th_General_Election

⁸⁷ National Election Board of Ethiopia. (2026). Statements on postponed and suspended electoral operations [Press releases]. NEBE; National Democratic Institute. (2015). Open Election Data Initiative: Polling stations. NDI. <https://openelectiondata.net/en/guide/key-categories/polling-stations/>

⁸⁸ National Election Board of Ethiopia. (2025, December 9). Timetable of the 7th General Election of Ethiopia (2018 E.C.) [Electoral calendar; dates converted from the Ethiopian calendar]. NEBE. <https://nebe.org.et/am/election-timeline>

security-affected localities in Amhara and Oromia.⁸⁹ In 2026, the deferment of Tigray's 2,648 stations, the suspension of polling in insecure Amhara constituencies, and disruption at approximately 143 stations across the Amhara and Oromia regions similarly meant that the planned and operated networks diverged.⁹⁰

5.1.4. Electoral Calendar

NEBE produced a detailed calendar for the Seventh General Election covering the full electoral cycle, from the organization of constituency offices in late February 2025 through polling on 1 June 2026 and the complaint, tabulation, and certification windows extending to 9 June 2026. The calendar sequenced more than thirty discrete milestones, which are set out in full in Table 3 below, in both the Gregorian and Ethiopian calendars.⁹¹ The decisive fact about this calendar, however, is not its content but the date on which it was officially announced. NEBE announced the calendar on 9 December 2025, which is the date on which the first of the two rounds of circulation of election-official lists to political parties also began. Polling day fell on 1 June 2026. The calendar was therefore made public less than six months before the vote, and not, as the Board's earlier communications had suggested, approximately a year in advance.

The consequence is a procedural gap of some nine and a half months at the front of the cycle. Activities scheduled between 23 February 2025 and 9 December 2025 were initiated and conducted before any calendar had been officially published. These were not peripheral activities. They comprised the organization of constituency and election offices, which ran from 23 February 2025; the accreditation of the civil society organizations that would provide voter education, completed on 25 October 2025; the recruitment of election officers, which opened on 27 October 2025; and the opening of the window for parties and independent candidates to submit their pre-registration documents on 17 November 2025. Each of these milestones requires rigorous strategic planning by stakeholders engaged in electoral activities; however, these phases were executed without the transparent, published deadlines that a formal electoral calendar is designed to provide.

CECOE emphasizes that a published calendar is a crucial step for improving electoral transparency, hence it must be treated as a fundamental requirement rather than an optional formality. Political parties preparing candidate slates, civil society organizations recruiting and budgeting for observers and voter educators, and media houses planning election coverage all

⁸⁹ ACE Electoral Knowledge Network. (n.d.). The electoral calendar. ACE Project. <https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/em/eme/eme03>; International IDEA. (2014). Electoral management design (Rev. ed.). International IDEA.

⁹⁰ National Election Board of Ethiopia. (2026). Stakeholder consultations on the Mirchaye and candidate registration systems [Press releases]. NEBE; Independent National Electoral Commission. (2022). Timetable and schedule of activities for the 2023 general election. INEC.

<https://inecnigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/TIMETABLE-FOR-2023-GENERAL-ELECTION.pdf>

⁹¹ National Election Board of Ethiopia. (2021). Final electoral timetable of the 2013 E.C. general election and note on the amendment of the electoral calendar. NEBE. <https://nebe.org.et/am/election-timeline>

had to commit resources against dates communicated piecemeal rather than against a published, consolidated schedule.

Table 3: NEBE electoral calendar of the Seventh General Election, showing each milestone against the date of the calendar’s official announcement

Activity	Gregorian date(s)	Status relative to the announcement
Organising constituency and election offices	23 February 2025 – 24 December 2025	Pre-announcement
Accreditation of CSOs providing voter education	25 October 2025	Pre-announcement
Recruitment of election officers	27 October 2025 – 17 January 2026	Pre-announcement / ongoing
Submission of pre-registration documents by parties and independent candidates	17 November 2025 – 29 December 2025	Pre-announcement / ongoing
Circulation of the list of election officials to political parties for comment (two rounds)	9 December 2025 – 27 January 2026	Date of the official announcement of the calendar
Accreditation of CSOs serving as election observers	15 December 2025	Post-announcement
Voter education for voter registration	15 December 2025 – 16 March 2026	Post-announcement
Publication of the list of polling stations conducting electronic self-registration	8 January 2026	Post-announcement
Candidate registration	9 January 2026 – 8 February 2026	Post-announcement; extended to 22 February 2026
Election campaign period	9 January 2026 – 27 May 2026	Post-announcement
Call for accreditation of media outlets covering the election	12 January 2026	Post-announcement
Packing and distribution of voter registration materials	13 January 2026 – 13 February 2026	Post-announcement

Activity	Gregorian date(s)	Status relative to the announcement
Opening of electronic voter self-registration	23 January 2026	Post-announcement
Cascaded voter registration training	25 January 2026 – 11 February 2026	Post-announcement
Publication of the full list of polling stations	28 January 2026	Post-announcement
Publication of the list of registered candidates and handling of grievances	11 February 2026 – 20 February 2026	Post-announcement
Voter registration	14 February 2026 – 16 March 2026	Post-announcement; rescheduled to 7 March – 22 April 2026
Announcement of the final list of candidates	23 February 2026	Post-announcement
Ballot-order lottery	25 February 2026 – 6 March 2026	Post-announcement; reported as conducted on 23 March 2026
Public display of the voter register	17 March 2026 – 27 March 2026	Post-announcement
Printing of ballot papers and official forms	21 March 2026 – 5 May 2026	Post-announcement
Voter education for polling day	29 March 2026 – 31 May 2026	Post-announcement
Packing and distribution of ballot papers and election materials	28 April 2026 – 31 May 2026	Post-announcement
Cascaded training on voting, counting, and result announcement	6 May 2026 – 24 May 2026	Post-announcement
Campaign-silence (cooling-off) period	28 May 2026 – 31 May 2026	Post-announcement
Polling day	1 June 2026	Post-announcement
Announcement of results at polling stations	1 June 2026 – 2 June 2026	Post-announcement

Activity	Gregorian date(s)	Status relative to the announcement
Grievance and complaint submission period	1 June 2026 – 9 June 2026	Post-announcement
Announcement of provisional results at constituency level	2 June 2026 – 6 June 2026	Post-announcement
Submission of results from constituencies to the Board	3 June 2026 – 8 June 2026	Post-announcement
Verification and official endorsement of results by the Board	4 June 2026 – 9 June 2026	Post-announcement

The ACE Electoral Knowledge Network and International IDEA advise that electoral calendars be published early, be sufficiently detailed to allow all stakeholders to plan, integrate legal deadlines, and build in consultation checkpoints; election-day certainty, in particular, is a cornerstone of a level playing field.⁹²

Evaluated on its content rather than on its publication date, the calendar has real strengths. It fixed polling day unambiguously, and, unlike calendars in several regional peers that compress registration and campaign windows into a few weeks, it allocated a campaign period of more than four and a half months and a full month of voter registration. The two-round circulation of election-official lists to political parties for comment is a confidence-building mechanism, and the Board consulted parties, civil society organizations, media, and disability associations during the development of the digital systems on which several calendar milestones depended.⁹³

Comparison with the Sixth General Election underscores the improvement in execution. The 2020 calendar, for the 2012 Ethiopian year, was voided entirely by the COVID-19 postponement. The reissued calendar for the 2013 Ethiopian year then had to be amended mid-course when the Board extended voter registration by fourteen days for reasons of materials distribution, security, and geography. That extension pushed polling day itself from 28 Ginbot to 14 Sene 2013 E.C., that is, to 21 June 2021, with Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa voting on a separate date and further constituencies deferred to 30 September 2021.⁹⁴ By contrast, the seventh election was held on the originally announced date, and the major calendar milestones, comprising office organization, accreditations, registrations, lotteries, the silence period, and polling, were executed in their planned sequence. This is an improvement in predictability for parties, observers, and voters alike, and it should be recorded as such alongside the criticism of the late publication.

The execution was not without its challenges, there are four specific deviations that should be noted for future improvement. First, candidate registration, scheduled to close on 8 February 2026, was extended to 22 February 2026 after parties and independent candidates reported

⁹² The Reporter Ethiopia. (2026, February 7). Election Board extends candidate registration deadline. The Reporter Ethiopia. <https://www.thereporterethiopia.com/49011>

⁹³ National Election Board of Ethiopia. (2026, March 28). Free airtime lottery for political parties and independent candidates [Press release]. NEBE. <https://nebe.org.et/en/node/1317>

⁹⁴ Ethiopia Observer. (2026, May 26). Elections will not be held in 46 constituencies across the Amhara and Tigray regions. Ethiopia Observer. <https://www.ethiopiaobserver.com/2026/05/26/elections-will-not-be-held-in-46-constituencies-across-the-amhara-and-tigray-regions/>; National Election Board of Ethiopia. (2026, May 29). Press briefing by Chairperson Melatework Hailu [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/tOI97WSCbYI> (from min. 08:14, stating that the approximately 143 polling stations at which operations were disrupted were located in both the Amhara and Oromia regions); Capital Ethiopia. (2026, June 3). African Union flags security concerns after polling suspended in 46 constituencies across Tigray and Amhara. <https://capitalethiopia.com/2026/06/03/african-union-flags-security-concerns-after-polling-suspended-in-46-constituencies-across-tigray-and-amhara/>

technical and procedural difficulties with the digital registration system. NEBE managed the extension transparently, through consultations, advance notice to party system administrators, training, manuals, a hotline, and a dedicated support channel. The extension nonetheless compressed downstream milestones such as the finalisation and publication of candidate lists.⁹⁵ Second, voter registration was twice altered. On 12 February 2026 the Board moved the start from 14 February to 7 March 2026 in order to finalise preparatory works, and on 4 April 2026 it extended the closing date from 16 March to 22 April 2026, citing system interruptions, network coverage problems, and transport limitations. The registration window was thus displaced by more than three weeks and lengthened by five, which reduced the interval between the close of registration and polling day. Third, certain publicity milestones slipped. The ballot-order lottery, scheduled for late February to early March, was reported as conducted on 23 March 2026, with the free-airtime lottery following on 28 March 2026. Although this timing still preceded the height of the campaign, it significantly reduced the notice available to emerging parties for media planning.⁹⁶ Fourth, and most consequentially, the calendar could not be applied uniformly across the territory. Registration and polling milestones were suspended or deferred in insecure constituencies of Amhara and Oromia and across Tigray, so that for a significant minority of citizens the published calendar was aspirational rather than operative.⁹⁷

5.1.5. Party and Candidate Registration

Political party and candidate registration for the seventh cycle was governed by Proclamations No. 1133/2019 and No. 1162/2019. Under Article 66 of Proclamation No. 1162/2019, an association may operate as a political party only after registration by NEBE and receipt of a certificate of legal personality. Applicants may first obtain a three-month temporary certificate, which is usable solely for the purpose of completing the registration requirements. During the inter-election period the Board publicly cautioned parties that had used temporary certificates as a basis for holding meetings and giving media interviews, and reminded government institutions not to establish official relations with temporarily certified parties. Registration requires, among other things, the party's founding documents, its program, bylaws meeting detailed democratic-governance standards including secret-ballot leadership elections, equal member

⁹⁵ Ethiopian Electoral, Political Parties Registration and Election's Code of Conduct Proclamation No. 1162/2019, art. 66, Federal Negarit Gazeta (2019). <https://nebe.org.et/sites/default/files/Ethiopian-Electoral-Proclamation-No-1162.pdf>; National Election Board of Ethiopia. (2022). Public notice on the use of temporary registration certificates [Press release]. NEBE.

⁹⁶ Ethiopian Electoral, Political Parties Registration and Election's Code of Conduct Proclamation No. 1162/2019, arts. 66–75, Federal Negarit Gazeta (2019). <https://nebe.org.et/sites/default/files/Ethiopian-Electoral-Proclamation-No-1162.pdf>; Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations for Elections. (2026). Report on political parties and candidate registration for the 7th General Election (ch. 3). CECOE.

⁹⁷ Addis Standard. (2023, March 16). News: Alarmed Electoral Board condemns rising government, security restrictions on assembly, undue pressure on opposition political parties. Addis Standard. <https://addisstandard.com/news-alarmed-electoral-board-condemns-rising-government-security-restrictions-on-assembly-undue-pressure-on-opposition-political-parties/>

voting rights, internal dispute resolution, gender-sensitive leadership obligations, and financial and audit systems, together with membership and funding information and the payment of a registration fee. Registration is refused where names, logos, or symbols conflict with those of existing parties or with legal standards. Candidate registration for the seventh cycle ran from 9 January 2026, was scheduled to close on 8 February 2026, and was extended by the Board to 22 February 2026.⁹⁸⁹⁹

The Board also acted, with mixed effect, as guarantor of parties' organizational rights. When Balderas for True Democracy, Gogot for Guraghe Unity and Justice, and Enat Party were reportedly prevented by law-enforcement interference from holding the general assemblies the law requires at least every three years, NEBE publicly condemned the obstruction, called on the Ministry of Justice to investigate and prosecute those responsible, and urged equal, non-discriminatory access to public meeting venues.¹⁰⁰

By the close of the process, the Board's consolidated candidate registration dataset recorded 10,438 registered candidates, of whom 10,358 stood for political parties and 80 as independents. The symbols of 48 registered parties were unveiled on 23 February 2026, when all of them signed the Election Code of Conduct.¹⁰¹ Forty-two parties ultimately fielded at least one candidate. Of the 10,438 candidates, 2,080, or 19.9 %, contested seats in the House of Peoples' Representatives, and 8,358, or 80.1 %, contested regional and city council seats. The analysis that follows is drawn from CECOE's record-level reconstruction of the Board's dataset, which resolves every candidate to a contest type, a region, a constituency, a party, a gender and, where declared, a disability, and which maps 1,153 electoral areas across the two contests. The comparison with the Sixth General Election is set out in Section 1.3.

⁹⁸ National Election Board of Ethiopia. (2026, February 23). Political parties sign Code of Conduct as NEBE officially launches election symbols. NEBE. <https://nebe.org.et/en/node/1268>; National Election Board of Ethiopia. (2026). Certified candidate lists of the 7th General Election. <https://nebe.org.et/en/candidate-list>

⁹⁹ CECOE analysis of the National Election Board of Ethiopia's consolidated candidate registration dataset returns 10,438 registered candidates (2,080 for the House of Peoples' Representatives and 8,358 for regional and city councils). The independently published tally in Africa Uncensored. (2026, May 31). Ethiopian election 2026: All you need to know about registered candidates.

<https://africauncensored.online/blog/2026/06/01/ethiopian-election-2026-all-you-need-to-know-about-registered-candidates/> returns 10,432 candidates (2,080 and 8,352), a difference of six regional and city council candidates. The Coalition reports its own figure and records the discrepancy.

¹⁰⁰ Africa Uncensored. (2026, May 31). Ethiopian election 2026: All you need to know about registered candidates. Africa Uncensored.

<https://africauncensored.online/blog/2026/06/01/ethiopian-election-2026-all-you-need-to-know-about-registered-candidates/>

¹⁰¹ Africa Uncensored. (2026, May 31). Ethiopian election 2026: All you need to know about registered candidates. Africa Uncensored.

<https://africauncensored.online/blog/2026/06/01/ethiopian-election-2026-all-you-need-to-know-about-registered-candidates/>; The Eastleigh Voice. (2026). Prosperity Party skips Tigray, leaves key opposition constituencies uncontested in Amhara, Addis Ababa.

<https://eastleighvoice.co.ke/ethiopia/322261/prosperity-party-skips-tigray-leaves-key-opposition-constituencies-uncontested-in-amhara-addis-ababa>

The composition of that field is set out in Tables 4 and 5. Women accounted for 2,691 candidates, or 25.8 % of the total, against 7,747 men, or 74.2 %. Women's representation was stronger in the regional and city council contests, where there were 2,210 of 8,358 candidates, or 26.4 %, than in the House of Peoples' Representatives contest, where they were 481 of 2,080, or 23.1 %. This is a material advance on previous cycles and reflects, in part, the deliberate incentives built into the amended legal framework, under which the number of supporting signatures required was reduced for women candidates and the number of women candidates fielded counted toward a party's entitlement to public funding and to free airtime. It nonetheless leaves women at roughly a quarter of the field in a country where they are approximately half of the register, and it leaves the House, the more consequential of the two contests, as the less inclusive. Only 5 of the 80 independent candidates were women.

The aggregate share conceals wide variation. Women were 34.2 % of candidates in Dire Dawa, 33.4 % in Oromia, 33.3 % in Harari and 31.7 % in Amhara, but only 16.9 % in Somali, 20.2 % in Central Ethiopia and 21.1 % in both Sidama and South West Ethiopia. The variation between parties is wider still, and it does not run along government and opposition lines in the direction that might be expected. The Prosperity Party fielded 1,135 women among its 2,941 candidates, a share of 38.6 %, and the Renaissance Party 133 of 315, or 42.2 %. Among the largest opposition contestants the shares were markedly lower: EZEMA fielded 146 women among 1,249 candidates, or 11.7 %, the Freedom and Equality Party 121 of 820, or 14.8 %, and the Cooperation for Ethiopian Unity 193 of 1,053, or 18.3 %. CECOIE draws two conclusions from this distribution. The inclusion incentives written into the funding and airtime formulas are capable of moving party behavior, and the party best resourced to respond to them did so most fully. The parties that competed most widely against it did not, and the overall share of women in the field is therefore lower than the incentive framework was designed to produce.

Candidates with a recorded disability numbered 275, or 2.6 % of all candidates, comprising 49 of the 2,080 House candidates, or 2.4 %, and 226 of the 8,358 council candidates, or 2.7 %. Of the 275, 206 were men and 69 were women. The recorded prevalence varies by region to a degree that the underlying population does not plausibly explain, from 6.0 % of candidates in Addis Ababa and 3.5 % in South Ethiopia to 1.1 % in Amhara, 0.9 % in Gambella and 0.3 % in Somali. CECOIE draws attention to the form in which this figure is held. The dataset records disability as a positive attribute where declared and is otherwise silent, so the absence of a record denotes an absence of declaration rather than an absence of disability, and CECOIE therefore does not treat the remaining candidates as candidates without disabilities. The regional variation is consistent with differences in willingness or opportunity to declare rather than with differences in prevalence. The true figure is likely to be understated, and CECOIE recommends that NEBE record disability status as a structured field with an explicit non-disclosure option, so that the participation of persons with disabilities can be measured rather than inferred. Even taken at face value, 275 candidates among 10,438 falls well below any plausible estimate of the share of Ethiopians living with a disability, and it is consistent with the finding of the African Union

Election Observation Mission that structural barriers left persons with disabilities underrepresented.¹⁰²

The dataset also records the educational attainment of candidates, and CECOE reports it here because it bears on the perennial question of who is in a position to stand. Of the 10,438 candidates, 9,732, or 93.2 %, had a recognizable qualification recorded. Within that group, 6,654 candidates, or 68.4 %, held a tertiary qualification, 2,405, or 24.7 %, had completed schooling only, and 673, or 6.9 %, recorded no formal education. Attainment was higher in the House of Peoples' Representatives contest, where 75.9 % of candidates held a tertiary qualification, than in the regional and city council contests, where 66.4 % did. It did not differ by gender: 68.4 % of men and 68.3 % of women held a tertiary qualification, so that the barrier to women's candidacy documented above operates on entry to the field rather than on the qualifications of those who enter it. In the remaining 706 records the education entry contains party-name text rather than a qualification, an artefact of the source documents, and those records are excluded from the percentages above.

Geographically, candidate registration was concentrated in the southern and central regions rather than in the two most populous ones. South Ethiopia produced the largest number of candidates at 1,497, followed by Sidama with 1,447, Oromia with 1,446, Amhara with 1,251, and Addis Ababa with 1,016. The pattern differs sharply between the two contests, and the difference is a function of how seats are allocated. In the House of Peoples' Representatives contest, where constituencies are apportioned by population, Amhara led with 494 candidates and Oromia followed with 458. In the regional and city council contests, Sidama led with 1,281 and South Ethiopia followed with 1,183, well ahead of Oromia's 988, reflecting the size of the regional councils established in the newly created regions rather than the size of their electorates. Women candidates were most numerous in Oromia with 483, followed by Amhara with 396, South Ethiopia with 332, Sidama with 305, and Addis Ababa with 300. The full distribution is set out in Table 4.

Table 4: Registered candidates by region, contest type, gender and recorded disability, Seventh General Election

Region	HoPR candidates	Council candidates	All candidates	Women (share)	Recorded disability
South Ethiopia	314	1,183	1,497	332 (22.2%)	52
Sidama	166	1,281	1,447	305 (21.1%)	33
Oromia	458	988	1,446	483 (33.4%)	45
Amhara	494	757	1,251	396 (31.7%)	14

¹⁰² National Election Board of Ethiopia. (2026, March 12). NEBE consults political parties on security issues for the 7th General Election. NEBE. <https://nebe.org.et/en/node/1280>

Region	HoPR candidates	Council candidates	All candidates	Women (share)	Recorded disability
Addis Ababa	219	797	1,016	300 (29.5%)	61
South West Ethiopia	95	659	754	159 (21.1%)	21
Central Ethiopia	164	570	734	148 (20.2%)	14
Somali	61	650	711	120 (16.9%)	2
Afar	48	507	555	151 (27.2%)	12
Benishangul-Gumuz	31	356	387	106 (27.4%)	13
Gambella	9	334	343	90 (26.2%)	3
Dire Dawa	13	209	222	76 (34.2%)	4
Harari	8	67	75	25 (33.3%)	1
All regions	2,080	8,358	10,438	2,691 (25.8%)	275

The distribution of candidates among parties shows the ruling party's advantage in reach, and it also shows the limits of that advantage. The Prosperity Party fielded 2,941 candidates in all, 28.2 % of the field: 461 for the House of Peoples' Representatives, or 22.2 % of that contest, and 2,480 for regional and city councils, or 29.7 %. EZEMA was the largest opposition contestant with 1,249 candidates in all, 293 for the House, or 14.1 %, and 956 for the councils, or 11.4 %. The Cooperation for Ethiopian Unity followed with 1,053 in all, 226 and 827 respectively, and the Freedom and Equality Party with 820, 164 and 656. The Wollo Peoples Democratic Party was the fifth-largest contestant for the House with 90 candidates, and the Peace for Ethiopia Coalition the fifth-largest for the councils with 329. A second measure shows the asymmetry of the field more clearly than candidate counts do. Measured by presence rather than by volume, the Prosperity Party appeared on the ballot in 1,105 of the 1,153 mapped electoral areas, or 95.8 %, against 530 areas for EZEMA, or 46.0 %, 443 for the Cooperation for Ethiopian Unity, or 38.4 %, and 382 for the Freedom and Equality Party, or 33.1 %. No other contestant appeared in more than 150 areas. The ruling party therefore fielded fewer than one in four House candidates and fewer than one in three council candidates, but it was the only party that was present in almost every electoral area in the country. That reach, rather than the raw number of candidates, is the structural asymmetry of the field, and it is what allows a party holding under a third of the candidates to be the default option on nearly every ballot.

Table 5: Five largest contestants by number of candidates, by contest type, Seventh General Election

House of Peoples' Representatives	Candidates	Share	Regional and city councils	Candidates	Share
Prosperity Party	461	22.2%	Prosperity Party	2,480	29.7%
EZEMA	293	14.1%	EZEMA	956	11.4%
Cooperation for Ethiopian Unity	226	10.9%	Cooperation for Ethiopian Unity	827	9.9%
Freedom and Equality Party	164	7.9%	Freedom and Equality Party	656	7.8%
Wollo Peoples Democratic Party	90	4.3%	Peace for Ethiopia Coalition	329	3.9%

The extent of choice actually available to voters is measured here at the level of the electoral area. Of the 1,153 constituencies mapped across both contests, 958, or 83.1 %, were contested by more than one party. The remaining 195, or 16.9 %, offered voters no choice between parties at all. Of those 195, 114 were areas in which several candidates stood but all of them for the same party, and 81 were areas in which a single candidate stood entirely unopposed. CECOE treats both categories as uncontested: an area in which every name on the ballot belongs to one party presents the voter with no partisan choice, and an area with one name presents no choice at all. The two contests differ. In the House of Peoples' Representatives contest, 434 of the 509 mapped areas, or 85.3 %, were contested by more than one party, and every one of the 75 uncontested areas had a single candidate. In the regional and city council contests, 524 of 644 areas, or 81.4 %, were contested by more than one party, while 114 had several candidates drawn from a single party and 6 had a single candidate. The distribution is set out in Table 6.

Table 6: Competitiveness of electoral areas by region, both contests, Seventh General Election

Region	Electoral areas	Contested by more than one party	Single party, several candidates	Single candidate	Uncontested share
Oromia	357	252	56	49	29.4%
Amhara	275	233	20	22	15.3%
South Ethiopia	105	100	3	2	4.8%
Somali	95	89	1	5	6.3%
Central Ethiopia	70	70	0	0	0.0%
Dire Dawa	49	17	32	0	65.3%

Region	Electoral areas	Contested by more than one party	Single party, several candidates	Single candidate	Uncontested share
South West Ethiopia	42	42	0	0	0.0%
Afar	38	38	0	0	0.0%
Sidama	38	38	0	0	0.0%
Addis Ababa	33	33	0	0	0.0%
Benishangul-Gumuz	29	26	0	3	10.3%
Gambella	17	15	2	0	11.8%
Harari	5	5	0	0	0.0%
All regions	1,153	958	114	81	16.9%

The concentration of uncontested areas is geographic and partisan at once. Of the 195 areas that offered no partisan choice, 105 were in Oromia, 42 in Amhara and 32 in Dire Dawa, so that three regions account for 92 % of the total, while Central Ethiopia, South West Ethiopia, Afar, Sidama, Addis Ababa and Harari had none. In 185 of the 195, or 94.9 %, the sole party on the ballot was the Prosperity Party; in 71 of them the Prosperity Party's candidate stood entirely alone, 65 in the House contest and 6 in the council contests. In the remaining 10 uncontested areas the sole party was EZEMA, the Cooperation for Ethiopian Unity, the Freedom and Equality Party, the National Movement of Amhara, the Gumuz People's Democratic Movement, the New Generation Party and independent candidates. More than four in five electoral areas therefore offered a choice between parties, and roughly one in six offered none. The areas offering none were not randomly distributed. In Oromia and Amhara they fall in the localities where insecurity and undue pressure were most acute, as the incident record set out in Section 5.4 demonstrates, and CECOE reads them together with the finding that opposition parties withdrew from, or never entered, those localities. Dire Dawa is the exception that qualifies the pattern: 32 of its 49 electoral areas, all of them council areas, were contested by the ruling party alone in a city administration where security was not a limiting factor, which points to the organizational reach of the parties rather than to constraint on them.

Beyond the record set out above, three further findings warrant emphasis. First, the digital prerequisites had reported effects on opposition candidacies. The Cooperation for Ethiopian Unity reported that between 255 and 300 of its qualifying candidates went unregistered because of disruptions in the digital system. The Ethiopian National Unity Party reported that its candidate slate fell from 1,100 to 167 because members had not obtained national digital IDs, and the Freedom and Equality Party reported losing 250 candidates for the same reason. NEBE

rejected these allegations in a detailed eight-page written response, setting out the consultations conducted during the development of the systems, the availability of assisted and manual registration for citizens without a national digital ID, and the training, manuals, toll-free hotline and dedicated support channel it had made available. CECOIE requested access to the back end of the candidate registration system so that the volume of submissions, rejections and reasons for rejection could be verified independently. That access was not granted. CECOIE therefore records both accounts, reports the outcome of the process rather than its internal record, and concludes only that the sequencing of the reform placed a demonstrable burden on smaller parties. Second, the competitive map that resulted contained meaningful gaps in both directions. The ruling party faced no opponent in 65 constituencies of the House of Peoples' Representatives, 46 of them in Oromia and 11 in Amhara, while conversely it declined to field candidates in 284 regional and city council seats and was absent altogether from 48 of the 509 mapped House electoral areas, 17 of them in Amhara. The combination shaped, in both directions, the range of choice actually available to voters. Third, the security environment penetrated the registration process itself. On 11 March 2026 the full Board met political parties to hear constituency-level security concerns bearing on candidate deployment and campaigning, and committed to establishing joint monitoring teams comprising Board monitors, party representatives, and civil society organizations in those constituencies where concerns had been reported. CECOIE regards this as a constructive response, and notes that the constituencies in which those concerns were raised overlap substantially with the constituencies that were ultimately uncontested.¹⁰³¹⁰⁴¹⁰⁵

5.1.6. Accreditation Process

NEBE's authority to accredit electoral stakeholders derives from Articles 114 and 117 of Proclamation No. 1162/2019 for election observers and Articles 124 and 125 for voter-education providers, and from Articles 7(7) and 8(1) of Proclamation No. 1133/2019, operationalised through Directive No. 4/2020 on voter education and Directive No. 5/2020 on local election observers. Accreditation serves three functions in this framework. It acts as a gatekeeping

¹⁰³ Ethiopian Electoral, Political Parties Registration and Election's Code of Conduct Proclamation No. 1162/2019, arts. 87 et seq., Federal Negarit Gazeta (2019).

<https://nebe.org.et/sites/default/files/Ethiopian-Electoral-Proclamation-No-1162.pdf>; Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations for Elections. (2026). Report on political parties and candidate registration for the 7th General Election (ch. 2.2). CECOIE.

¹⁰⁴ Ethiopian Electoral, Political Parties Registration and Election's Code of Conduct Proclamation No. 1162/2019, provisions on the allocation of government financial support to political parties, Federal Negarit Gazeta (2019). <https://nebe.org.et/sites/default/files/Ethiopian-Electoral-Proclamation-No-1162.pdf>; National Election Board of Ethiopia. (2026). Allocation of state campaign support for the 7th General Election [Press release]. NEBE.

¹⁰⁵ Ethiopian Reporter. (2026). የፖለቲካ ፓርቲዎች የገንዘብ ድጋፍ ድልድል [Allocation of financial support to political parties]. Ethiopian Reporter. <https://ethiopianreporter.com/155816>, reporting that the Board distributed 170 million birr to political parties, released only the first 30 % tranche of the regular annual allocation, and that parties described the distribution formula as non-transparent; The Reporter Ethiopia. (2026, May 30). Ethiopia heads to seventh election amid unsettled debates over security, fairness. <https://www.thereporterethiopia.com/50930/>, in which the NEBE Chairperson cites budget constraints and states that the Board has done everything it can to disburse financial support to parties.

mechanism, ensuring that only qualified, non-partisan actors gain access to sensitive electoral spaces. It bolsters transparency by enabling independent oversight. And it establishes accountability, since every accredited body must sign a code of conduct whose violation can lead to decertification. Accreditation for the seventh cycle proceeded on four tracks under this framework, with the electoral calendar fixing 25 October 2025 as the milestone for voter-education accreditation and 15 December 2025 for domestic observers, a sequencing that, positively, preceded voter registration so that accredited groups could observe the registration exercise itself.

Accreditation of Domestic Stakeholders: Voter-Education and Observer CSOs

NEBE initially accredited 143 civil society organizations to provide voter and civic education, a figure subsequently increased to 169, which made this the largest category of accredited bodies in the cycle. Applicants were assessed against Article 125 of Proclamation No. 1162/2019, which requires legal registration as a local CSO or accredited higher-learning institution, demonstrated capacity, and strict non-partisanship. Before accreditation, each organization signed the Voter Education Code of Conduct and completed an onboarding briefing by NEBE experts covering the Board's mandate, the legal framework, inclusive outreach strategies, and ethical conduct. All accredited CSOs were required to use the Board's training manual, and their activities were monitored under Directive No. 4/2020. The Board announced an incident-reporting system to complement its field monitoring and encouraged CSOs to coordinate mapping so that voter education would reach all eligible voters, with particular emphasis on women and persons with disabilities. During the accreditation process, however, participating CSOs raised three concerns: the late availability of training materials in Braille, the limited number of languages in which materials were prepared, and the adequacy of the Board's monitoring capacity.

For election observation, NEBE accredited 45 local observer CSOs under Directive No. 5/2020 at its initial announcement, a number the Board subsequently increased to 55, and published the list on its website. The accredited observer organizations were responsible for screening and securing official credentials for their own deployments and collectively obtained accreditation for 65,299 domestic observers, who tracked the process across more than 500 constituencies. The number actually deployed is not established in the public record, and CECOE therefore reports the accredited figure rather than a deployment figure. Gender-focused observation was a distinct strand of the accreditation landscape: EWLA monitored 136 polling stations, and TIMRAN deployed 150 accredited observers dedicated to documenting violence against women in elections (VAWiE). A notable innovation was the digitalization of the process itself: on 4–5 November 2025, NEBE demonstrated an online registration and data management system for observer CSOs, replacing paper-based registration and documentation with a digital workflow intended to improve the efficiency and transparency of accreditation.

Accreditation of Media, Party Agents, and International Observers

Following a public call for media accreditation on 12 January 2026, NEBE accredited over 1,100 journalists from 37 media institutions to cover the process. Candidate (party) agents were accredited through the constituency structure: under Articles 14–16 of Proclamation No. 1162/2019, constituency offices transmit lists of candidate agents to polling stations, entitling agents to observe registration, polling, counting, and tabulation. NEBE also accredited international observer missions, providing external assessment of the process against national law and international democratic principles. The African Union Election Observation Mission (AUEOM), led by former Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta, deployed 73 observers in 27 teams and monitored opening, voting, closing, and counting procedures in 495 polling stations across 38 constituencies in eight regions, building on a pre-election assessment mission conducted on 16–20 March 2026. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Election Observation Mission, led by Dr. Speciosa Wandira Kazibwe and Mohamed Ali Houmed, observed 208 polling stations and found operations peaceful, orderly, and heavily monitored by party agents and domestic observers. The accreditation and deployment of these missions provided an external benchmark against which domestic observation findings could be triangulated.

Three concerns qualify this generally functional picture. First, media accreditation was conditioned on a signed oath committing outlets to specified reporting obligations. Because journalists and rights organizations argued the undertaking was broad enough to restrict legitimate reporting, some accreditation revocations were documented during the period. Second, the accreditation of citizen observers took place under the shadow of draft CSO-law amendments, which, had they been enacted as first circulated, would have required an ACSO letter of support for election observation and barred foreign funding. This legal uncertainty complicated observer groups' planning and fundraising during the accreditation window. Third, accreditation did not fully insulate observers from administrative pressure: on 28 May 2026, days before the vote, NEBE's Election Observation Coordination team warned CECOE that its earlier preliminary statements allegedly violated Article 23 of Directive No. 5/2020 and that continued non-compliance would carry legal consequences, a matter resolved only after CECOE's Board and Secretariat appealed directly to the NEBE Board Chairperson. These episodes echo a recurring pattern in Ethiopia's history: in 2005, restrictive criteria disqualified thousands of prospective domestic observers. Against that backdrop, the seventh cycle's comparatively open accreditation represents progress, but the media oath, the CSO-law uncertainty, and late-hour regulatory pressure show that independent oversight remains contingent rather than guaranteed.

The critical incident findings documented in Section 5.4 confirm that accreditation on paper did not always translate into access in practice. Observers were denied entry to registration stations, as set out in Section 5.4.10.4, and to polling stations, as set out in Section 5.4.11.15. Observers were excluded from vote counts, as set out in Section 5.4.11.18.2. Unauthorized and unaccredited individuals were present at, and in at least one case acted as officers in, registration

and polling stations, as set out in Sections 5.4.10.8 and 5.4.11.11. And observers faced threats, intimidation, and harassment, as set out in Section 5.4.11.16.

Synthesis of Election Observation Reports: Ethiopia's 2026 General Elections

The African Union Election Observation Mission (AUEOM)

The African Union Election Observation Mission (AUEOM), led by former Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta and supported by former Nigerian Foreign Minister Geoffrey Onyeama, deployed 73 observers across 27 teams to monitor Ethiopia's June 1, 2026, General Elections. This deployment followed a Pre-Election Assessment Mission (PAM) from March 16–20, 2026, which evaluated the nation's preparedness and informed the AUEOM's consultations with the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE), political parties, and civil society actors.

In accordance with the AU's election observation methodology, the Mission monitored opening, voting, closing, and counting procedures in 495 polling stations across 38 constituencies. This coverage spanned urban, peri-urban, and rural areas across eight regions: Addis Ababa, Oromia, Dire Dawa, Sidama, South Ethiopia, Harari, Benishangul-Gumuz, and Somali.

The AUEOM concluded that the elections were conducted within a legally adequate framework, reporting a record of 50.5 million registered voters and a field of 10,934 candidates. Both figures were those available to the Mission at the time of its preliminary statement; NEBE's final published summary records 54,057,861 registered voters, and the Board's consolidated candidate dataset records 10,438 registered candidates. A critical pre-election finding of the Mission was that severe insecurity in the Tigray, Amhara, and Oromia regions restricted political campaigns, completely excluded the Tigray region, and left 6,400 polling stations inactive. The Mission further found that structural barriers left women, independent candidates, and persons with disabilities underrepresented.

On Election Day, the Mission found opening and voting procedures to be highly peaceful, transparent, and legally compliant, marked by the professional, non-intrusive conduct of security personnel and a strong presence of domestic observers. The core operational challenge, however, was that high voter turnout and inadequate polling station sizes caused massive congestion, leaving queues at 88% of stations by closing time and forcing a six-hour voting extension until midnight. While this extension successfully maximized voter participation, it triggered severe operational strain including staff fatigue and poor lighting in temporary structures, which ultimately prevented the AUEOM from comprehensively observing the final closing, counting, and tabulation processes.

To address these challenges, the AUEOM recommends that future electoral processes prioritize comprehensive regional stabilization and conflict resolution to guarantee universal franchise, safely reintegrate excluded areas like Tigray, and reactivate dormant polling stations. Additionally, the NEBE should expand electoral infrastructure by increasing the size and number

of polling stations to mitigate congestion, while equipping temporary structures with robust backup lighting and implementing staff rotation shifts. Finally, the Mission emphasizes the need for targeted legal and structural reforms that actively lower barriers to representation for women, independent candidates, and persons with disabilities.

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development Election Observation Mission (IGAD EOM)

Led by Dr. Wandira Speciosa Kazibwe and Mohamed Ali Houmed, the IGAD Election Observation Mission (EOM) concluded that Ethiopia's June 1, 2026, General Elections were a successful, peaceful milestone for constitutionalism and stability. Supported by a legal framework lowering the voting age to 18 and candidacy to 21, the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) registered 54.1 million voters (46% women, 54% men) and managed over 10,000 candidates from 42 parties across 501 constituencies. Key institutional innovations included the "Mirchaye" digital voter registration system, GIS polling mapping, collaborative security risk-mapping, transparent media airtime lotteries, and special voting frameworks for military personnel and IDPs. However, security challenges barred 8 constituencies in Amhara and 38 in Tigray from participating, and women remained underrepresented in leadership and candidate pools.

On Election Day, observers at 208 polling stations found operations to be peaceful, orderly, well equipped, and heavily monitored by party agents and domestic observers (like CECOE and EHRC). High turnout overwhelmed the 1,500-voter capacity limit per station, causing massive queues and prompting NEBE to issue a six-hour voting extension. While this maximized participation, poor communication from NEBE headquarters led to inconsistent regional implementation.

Civil Society Organization (CSO) Accreditation and Deployment

To observe the 7th General Election, the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) accredited 55 local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). These organizations were responsible for screening and securing official credentials, and 65,299 domestic observers were accredited through them to track voting across more than 500 constituencies; the number actually deployed is not established in the public record. Over 45 of these accredited CSOs actively participated under a unified observation umbrella. This included prominent groups such as the Center for Advancement of Rights and Democracy (CARD), the Consortium of Ethiopian Human Rights Organizations (CEHRO), the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO), the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association (EWLA), TIMRAN, and the Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations for Elections (CECOE), which served as the lead deployment coalition responsible for issuing midday, situational, and preliminary statements.

Regulatory Challenges and the CECOE Advocacy Intervention

CECOE's leadership successfully navigated a major regulatory challenge just days before the election. On May 28, 2026, NEBE's Election Observation Coordination team alleged via email that CECOE's prior statements violated Article 23 of Directive No. 05/2020 by discussing critical incidents and offering opinions before official results. The email warned that continued non-compliance would bring severe legal consequences that risked halting operations, prompting CECOE's Board and Secretariat to immediately appeal to the NEBE Board Chairperson. This swift intervention secured the necessary rectification, allowing CECOE to safely proceed with its deployment.

Gender-Focused and Inclusive Observation Initiatives

Gender-focused observation played a highly coordinated role in the election, anchored by the joint establishment of a central Women's Situation Room in Addis Ababa by EWLA and TIMRAN. The Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association (EWLA) monitored 136 polling stations nationwide and declared the June 1, 2026 election to be free, fair, peaceful, and inclusive. They noted that a calm and secure environment allowed women to vote confidently and that 92.5% of observed stations were fully accessible to pregnant women, nursing mothers, the elderly, and people with disabilities. Meanwhile, TIMRAN deployed 150 accredited domestic observers to selected constituencies to focus exclusively on evaluating and documenting instances of Violence Against Women in Elections (VAWiE), assessing the security and structural obstacles facing female candidates, voters, and officials before officially releasing its preliminary report on June 5, 2026.

Complementing these efforts, the Ethiopian Women's Federation reported to the IGAD Mission that they had trained and deployed over 10,000 women observers across the country as part of a broader peacebuilding initiative. This included a specific sub-contingent of 5,432 election observers (including 267 long-term and 2,241 mobile observers) who monitored all regional states and city administrations. They reported a smooth start to the election with no major security incidents, minimal opening delays, and prompt, successful interventions by NEBE to resolve minor electronic tablet technical issues that caused long queues in Addis Ababa.

5.1.7. Political Party Financing and Campaign Financing

The legal framework for political party and campaign finance is contained in Proclamation No. 1162/2019. The Proclamation permits parties to derive income from membership contributions, from donations by Ethiopian individuals and domestic entities within statutory ceilings, from income on party property, and from government support, while prohibiting foreign-source funding and donations from entities such as government bodies and public enterprises. Parties are tax-exempt on member and supporter contributions, but they must submit annual reports on assets, liabilities, and income sources, maintain auditable accounts, and disclose finance

information to NEBE on request.¹⁰⁶ Two regulatory gaps qualify this framework. First, the law imposes no ceiling on political parties' campaign expenditure, which leaves the scale of campaign spending effectively unregulated and permits a party with greater resources to convert that advantage into unlimited visibility. Second, there is no effective regulation of online crowdfunding. The sources of funds raised through such platforms, and in particular potential contributions from foreign sources that the law otherwise prohibits, therefore lie largely beyond effective scrutiny. Public funding is allocated by NEBE according to statutory criteria that weight parliamentary representation, the number of candidates fielded, and the number of female candidates, a formula designed to reward both presence and inclusion. The Board is empowered to audit party accounts and to sanction non-compliance.¹⁰⁷

In practice, the seventh cycle recorded both equalization measures and persistent asymmetries. On the positive side, NEBE transferred state campaign funding to 36 political parties ahead of the vote. The published record of that disbursement is partial. The Board reported distributing 170 million birr to political parties against an election budget of approximately 11 billion birr, and released only the first 30 % tranche of the regular annual allocation, with the remaining 70 % and the second installment still pending at the time of reporting. Several parties described the distribution formula as non-transparent, and the Board's Chairperson attributed the shortfall to budget constraints while maintaining that the Board had done everything it could to disburse support.¹⁰⁸

Airtime Allocation to Political Parties

NEBE deployed three distinct levelling instruments during the campaign. It allocated free airtime on state media across 50 media outlets through a public lottery conducted with the Ethiopian Media Authority on 28 March 2026, so that no party, including the ruling party, could claim the most favorable slots. It organized nineteen nationally broadcast debate forums, preceded by a four-day mock-debate training for party representatives in October 2025. And it ran a ballot-order lottery to neutralize positional advantage.¹⁰⁹ Election-period media programming

¹⁰⁶ National Election Board of Ethiopia. (2026, March 28). Free airtime lottery for political parties and independent candidates. NEBE. <https://nebe.org.et/en/node/1317>

¹⁰⁷ Intergovernmental Authority on Development Election Observation Mission. (2026). Preliminary report of the IGAD Election Observation Mission to the 7th General Election of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia held on Monday, 1 June 2026. IGAD.

<https://igad.int/igad-election-observation-mission-to-the-7th-general-election-of-the-federal-democratic-republic-of-ethiopia-held-on-monday-june-1-2026-preliminary-report/>

¹⁰⁸ Ethiopian Reporter. (2026). የፖለቲካ ፓርቲዎች የገንዘብ ድጋፍ [Financial support to political parties]. Ethiopian Reporter. <https://ethiopianreporter.com/155816>; The Reporter Ethiopia. (2026, May 30). Ethiopia heads to seventh election amid unsettled debates over security, fairness.

<https://www.thereporterethiopia.com/50930/>

¹⁰⁹ Borkena. (2026, February 26). EZEMA accuses government over contribution from business community, public servants. Borkena. <https://borkena.com/2026/02/26/ezema-accuses-government-over-contribution-from-business-community-public-servants/>; Ethio Negari. (2026, February 25). Opposition party accuses Prosperity Party of illegal

ultimately encompassed approximately 782 hours of radio, 570 hours of television, and 576 newspaper columns of electoral coverage in Amharic, Afaan Oromo, Somali, Afar, and Sidama, distributed across 24 radio stations, 20 television stations, and 6 newspapers, rising to 66 channels once subsidiary and multilingual broadcasts are counted.¹¹⁰

On the negative side, three findings stand out. First, the disbursement of public funding was incomplete and late. At the time of NEBE's own announcement, 23 parties had yet to receive their allocations, a delay that, in a compressed campaign, disproportionately harms small parties with no alternative resources.¹¹¹ Second, allegations of abuse of position surfaced. EZEMA publicly accused the ruling party of imposing compulsory financial contributions on the business community in order to fund its campaign. If substantiated, such conduct would violate both the donation rules of Proclamation No. 1162/2019 and the Code of Conduct's prohibition on the use of coercion and undue influence.¹¹² Third, the structural advantage of incumbency remained the dominant financial fact of the campaign. Organizational reach, influence over state institutions, and privileged visibility together constituted an advantage that the formal equalization instruments mitigated only at the margin.¹¹³

5.1.8. Civic Space

179 events were documented over the scan period. The right to assembly accounted for the largest share (84 events), followed by election security (30), the election environment (25), the right to association (17), the media environment and freedom of the press (12), arrests and detentions (7), and civil society operations (4). Geographically, documented events were concentrated in Addis Ababa (59), Tigray (24), Amhara (21), South Ethiopia (14), and Central Ethiopia (14), with the remainder distributed across Oromia, Sidama, Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambela, Afar, Dire Dawa, and Somali, alongside events of nationwide scope. The election security events documented by the scan – armed attacks, abductions, and inter-communal clashes that together accounted for more than 160 recorded fatalities during the period – are treated in the

fundraising.

<https://ethionegari.com/2026/02/25/opposition-party-accuses-prosperity-party-of-illegal-fundraising/>

¹¹⁰ Clingendael Institute. (2026, May 29). Ethiopia to the polls in 2026: Managed elections, unmanaged conflicts. Clingendael.

<https://www.clingendael.org/publication/ethiopia-polls-2026-managed-elections-unmanaged-conflicts>

¹¹¹ National Election Board of Ethiopia. (2025, November 14). Registration announcement: Wudib Woldo

Tigray [Post]. Facebook. <https://web.facebook.com/share/p/1Ck35GtRuS/>; National Election Board of

Ethiopia. (2025, December 29). Registration announcement: Democratic Simret Tigray [Post]. Facebook.

<https://web.facebook.com/share/p/1GVdwG2zcS/>; National Election Board of Ethiopia. (2026, January 12).

Registration announcement: Denta People's Democratic Party [Post]. Facebook.

<https://web.facebook.com/share/p/1GH42ZUiCe/>; National Election Board of Ethiopia. (2026, February 6).

Registration announcement: People by People (Humanity) Party [Post]. Facebook.

<https://web.facebook.com/share/p/16xsB3ikkZ/>

¹¹² Ethiopian News Agency. (2025, August 20). Eleven regional political parties form a coalition. ENA.

https://www.ena.et/web/eng/w/eng_7168772

¹¹³ Cooperation for Ethiopian Unity. (2025, September 20). Inaugural conference statement [Post]. Facebook.

<https://web.facebook.com/share/p/1Da4E9YaSD/>; Cooperation for Ethiopian Unity. (2026, January 2).

Registration announcement [Post]. Facebook. <https://web.facebook.com/share/p/17pL3vSos3/>

Electoral Security Environment and Critical Incidents sections of this report. The findings presented below therefore focus on the three fundamental freedoms that define the civic space within which the election was contested.

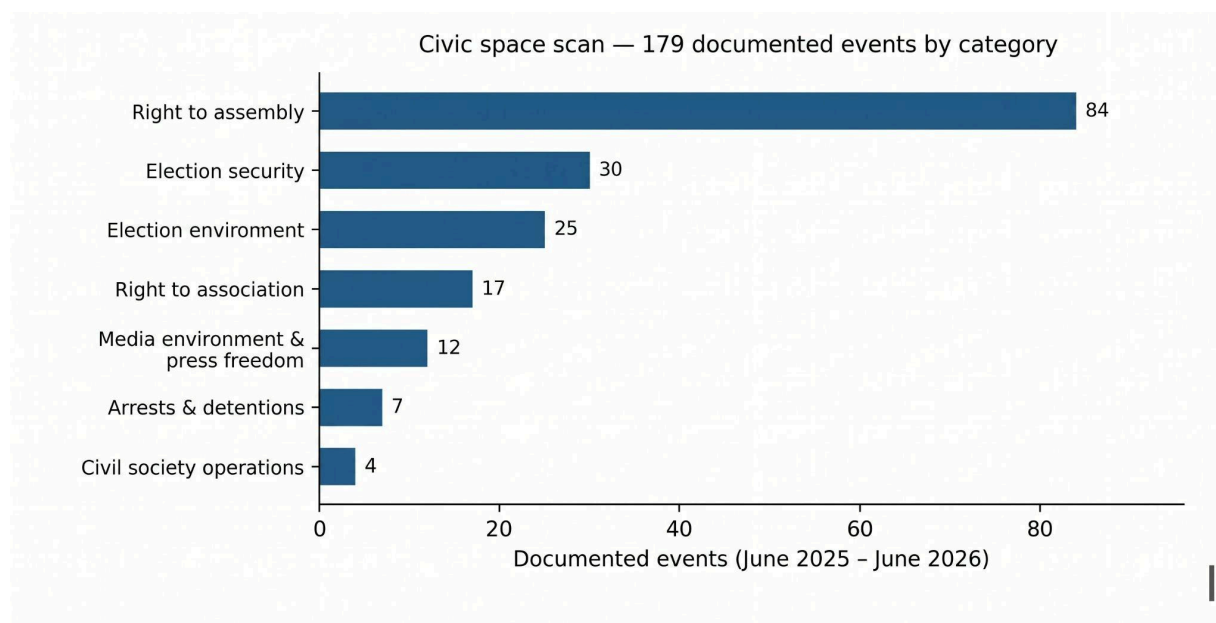


Figure 2: Civic space scan – documented events by category

The Right to Association

NEBE issued registration certificates to several new regional parties over the course of the period. These were Wudib Woldo Tigray (Woldo) in November 2025, Democratic Simret Tigray (Simret) in December 2025, the Denta People's Democratic Party in January 2026, and the People by People (Humanity) Party and the Sidama Rational Democratic Party in February 2026. Coalition-building likewise proceeded. On 20 August 2025, eleven regional political parties formed a coalition in Addis Ababa to contest the elections, a step publicly welcomed by the NEBE chairperson. On 20 September 2025, five parties held the inaugural conference of what became the Cooperation for Ethiopian Unity, which received its registration certificate from the Board in January 2026. In Tigray, four political parties, together with prominent former military commanders, launched the “Reform Seekers” movement in August 2025. In July 2025, a tripartite agreement between the Political Parties Joint Council, the African Leadership

Excellence Academy, and the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy established a professional capacity-building program for political party leaders.¹¹⁴¹¹⁵¹¹⁶¹¹⁷¹¹⁸

The Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) entered the electoral period without legal identity: in November 2025 the party repeated its demand for the restoration of its registration, contending that its de-registration was politically motivated, while NEBE maintained that the party had been suspended for failing to meet legal requirements, including the holding of a mandatory general assembly.¹¹⁹ In the same month, the Board barred the Enat Party, a founding member of the Cooperation for Ethiopian Unity, from continuing its coordination within the coalition.¹²⁰ Interference with opposition party members at the district level was reported in several localities. The Kucha People's Democratic Party reported that five of its members were arbitrarily arrested and beaten by police in Sikole Kebele in June 2025, and that its head of Peace and Relations Affairs was assaulted, threatened, and arrested while seeking a residency identification card, having reportedly been told that party members and leaders could not remain in Kucha.¹²¹ In October 2025, the Peace Coalition, representing eleven opposition parties, accused security forces in Arba Minch of arbitrarily arresting and beating its members during late-night raids conducted without court warrants, claiming that one official was left disabled; the local police commander denied the allegations, maintaining that the individuals were detained lawfully for inciting communal conflict.¹²² Also in October 2025, the Oromo Federalist Congress reported that its coordinator for the Hawa Galan District and Kelem Wollega Zone youth league was detained without being informed of the reasons for his arrest, interrogated, or brought before a court within the constitutionally mandated 48 hours.¹²³

¹¹⁴ UMD Media. (2025, August 1). General Tsadikan launches movement to end TPLF dominance and urges civil disobedience across Tigray. UMD Media.

<https://umdmmedia.com/general-tsadikan-launches-movement-to-end-tplf-dominance-and-urges-civil-disobedience-across-tigray/>

¹¹⁵ Ethiopian News Agency. (2025, July 14). Tripartite agreement on building capacity of political party leaders signed. ENA. https://www.ena.et/web/eng/w/eng_6952503

¹¹⁶ Deutsche Welle Amharic. (2025, November 27). Interview with TPLF spokesperson Michael Asgedom [Post]. Facebook. <https://web.facebook.com/share/p/1CGJycrHiQ/>

¹¹⁷ National Election Board of Ethiopia. (2025, November 20). Decision concerning the Enat Party [Post]. Facebook. <https://web.facebook.com/share/p/1CbqyR6QTW/>

¹¹⁸ Kucha People's Democratic Party. (2025, June 4). Statement on the arrest of party members [Post].

Facebook. <https://web.facebook.com/share/p/17r8ES4grZ/>; Kucha People's Democratic Party. (2025, June 16). Statement on the assault and arrest of a party official [Post]. Facebook.

<https://web.facebook.com/share/p/1AThCrPraP/>

¹¹⁹ Wolaita Times. (2025, October 15). Peace Coalition accuses security forces in Arba Minch. Wolaita Times. <https://wolaitatimes.com/?p=6461>

¹²⁰ Oromo Federalist Congress. (2025, October 28). Urgent alert on the detention of Gammachuu Doboc Gabbisaa [Post]. Facebook. <https://web.facebook.com/OromoFederalistCongressParty/>

¹²¹ Human Rights Watch. (2025, June 25). Ethiopia: Crackdown on health workers' protests. HRW. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/06/25/ethiopia-crackdown-on-health-workers-protests>

¹²² Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations Council. (2025, September 16). National Peace Conference [Post]. Facebook. <https://web.facebook.com/ethiopian.cso.council/>

¹²³ Ethiopian News Agency. (2025, July 25). Political parties pledge to work collaboratively for national interest, unity, peace and consolidation of democracy. ENA. https://www.ena.et/web/eng/w/eng_7008804

Pressures on civil society organizations were also recorded. In early June 2025, the Ethiopian Authority for Civil Society Organizations suspended the Ethiopian Health Professionals Association, one of the first groups to endorse the demands of striking public healthcare workers.¹²⁴ More positively, the Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations Council convened its National Peace Conference in Addis Ababa in September 2025 without obstruction,¹²⁵ and civil society actors participated in consultative legislative processes over the course of the period.

The Right to Assembly

The right to assembly was the most frequently documented category, with 84 events recorded, of which 72 (86 %) proceeded without obstruction, including in several instances with the facilitation or protection of state authorities. Campaign gatherings constituted the largest group of assembly events (33), and corroborated the pattern reported by CECOE's pre-election observers: parties including the Ethiopian Citizens for Social Justice (EZEMA), the Gogot Party, the Freedom and Equality Party, the Cooperation for Ethiopian Unity, the Renaissance Party, the National Movement of Amhara, the Afar People's Party, and the Raya Rayuma Democratic Party held public campaign events without hindrance in Addis Ababa, the Central Ethiopia, South Ethiopia, Sidama, Somali, Afar, and Gambela regions, and Dire Dawa.

Party congresses and internal meetings similarly proceeded largely without hindrance in the capital and major towns. EZEMA concluded its second General Assembly in July 2025 and convened an emergency assembly in March 2026 at which it replaced its leadership. The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party held its eleventh General Assembly in Hawassa, and the Ethiopian Federal Democratic Unity Forum held its seventeenth General Assembly in June 2025. The Central Committee of the Oromo Federalist Congress convened regular sessions in July 2025, and the TPLF Central Committee met in November 2025 and again in Axum in April 2026. The founding meeting of the Simret Tigray Party was held in Addis Ababa in October 2025 with state facilitation. A national conference of political parties convened in Bishoftu in July 2025 with the Ministry of Peace and the Joint Council of Ethiopian Political Parties, and produced a seven-point joint declaration prioritising peaceful political struggle.¹²⁶

Obstruction, where it occurred, disproportionately affected newly certified and smaller parties. According to NEBE's own statements, the founding general assemblies of the Kontoma People's Democratic Party, scheduled for 9 November 2025 in Butajira, and of the Denta People's Democratic Party, scheduled for 21 December 2025 in the Hadiya Zone, were obstructed despite

¹²⁴ National Election Board of Ethiopia. (2025, November 24). Statement concerning the founding general assembly of the Kontoma People's Democratic Party [Post]. Facebook. <https://web.facebook.com/share/p/187rGCSzPu/>; National Election Board of Ethiopia. (2025, December). Statement concerning the founding general assembly of the Denta People's Democratic Party [Press release]. NEBE.

¹²⁵ Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party. (2025, December 6). Statement on the cancellation of a public rally venue [Post]. Facebook. <https://web.facebook.com/eprpinfo>

¹²⁶ Tikvah Ethiopia. (2025, September). Report on the arrest of Gumuz People's Democratic Movement leaders in Zai Woreda [Post]. Telegram. <https://t.me/tikvahethiopia/99708>

the Board having formally notified the regional government administration and the regional police commission in advance to ensure that the assemblies could proceed safely.¹²⁷ The EPRP reported that a public rally planned for 6 December 2025 in Addis Ababa was blocked when the host venue was pressured into cancelling its rental contract at the last minute.¹²⁸ In September 2025, a Benishangul-Gumuz regional council member reported that five of eight local leaders of the Gumuz People's Democratic Movement were arrested, and some tortured, in connection with a party conference in Zai Woreda of which the authorities had been duly notified.¹²⁹ The Kucha People's Democratic Party was again prevented from assembling in March 2026.¹³⁰

Protest activity was substantial throughout the period and, in most recorded instances, proceeded without dispersal. In Tigray, internally displaced persons demonstrated in Mekelle in June 2025 to demand return to their places of origin.¹³¹ Sustained demonstrations over contested administrative appointments took place across the Southern Zone in July and August 2025, in towns including Maichew, Mekhoni, Ambalage, and Adi Gudem; the unrest of 27 and 28 July reportedly resulted in the death of a farmer and the arrest of two journalists covering the events.¹³² Members of the Tigray forces mounted prolonged protests over unpaid salaries and benefits in October and November 2025, blocking major roads, including the Adigrat–Mekelle highway.¹³³ In the Afar region, security personnel and civil servants in Gewane Woreda protested in October 2025 over eight months of unpaid salaries and a chronic water crisis.¹³⁴ In Dire Dawa, protests erupted in November 2025 after police attempted to arrest a young man who had criticised the Prime Minister's parliamentary statement on the constitutional status of the city.¹³⁵ In the Amhara region, residents of multiple cities demonstrated in support of peace initiatives in June 2025. A demonstration was held in Kobo in March 2026 in support of the House of Federation's decision on the disputed Raya districts, amid allegations that displaced persons were pressured to

¹²⁷ The Reporter (Amharic). (2026, April 22). Report on the obstruction of the Kucha People's Democratic Party assembly. Ethiopian Reporter. <https://ethiopianreporter.com/154947/>

¹²⁸ The Reporter Ethiopia. (2025, June 18). The long walk home: Coverage of internally displaced persons' demonstrations in Mekelle. The Reporter Ethiopia. <https://www.thereporterethiopia.com/45708/>

¹²⁹ BBC Amharic. (2025, July 27–28). Coverage of the Southern Tigray demonstrations. BBC. <https://www.bbc.com/amharic/articles/c1leg45ld1po>

¹³⁰ Tikvah Ethiopia. (2025, October–November). Reports on the Tigray forces' protests over unpaid salaries [Post]. Telegram. <https://t.me/tikvahethiopia/100710>

¹³¹ Tikvah Ethiopia. (2025, October 20). Report on the Gewane Woreda protest [Post]. Telegram. <https://t.me/tikvahethiopia/100767>

¹³² APA News. (2025, November 5). Protests erupt as Ethiopian PM's critic wanted. APA News. <https://apanews.net/protests-erupt-as-ethiopian-pms-critic-wanted/>

¹³³ Addis Standard. (2026, March 7). Demonstration held in Kobo town, Amhara region, supporting House of Federation decision; IDPs allege pressure to participate. Addis Standard. <https://addisstandard.com/demonstration-held-in-kobo-town-amhara-region-supporting-house-of-federation-decision-idps-allege-pressure-to-participate/>

¹³⁴ Amhara Association of America. (2026, April). April 2026 protests in Ethiopia's Amhara region: Situation overview and analysis. AAA. <https://www.amharaamerica.org/post/april-2026-protests-in-ethiopia-s-amhara-region-situation-overview-and-analysis>

¹³⁵ APA News. (2025, June 10). Nationwide strike by Ethiopian health professionals remains unresolved. APA News. <https://apanews.net/nationwide-strike-by-ethiopian-health-professionals-remains-unresolved/>

participate.¹³⁶ In early April 2026, demonstrations opposing the holding of the elections and condemning alleged abuses were reported across numerous districts of the North Wollo, North Shewa, East Gojjam, West Gojjam, Awi, North Gondar, and South Gondar zones.¹³⁷ The nationwide strike by health professionals that began in May 2025 was, by contrast, met with arrests, harassment, and intimidation of participants,¹³⁸ and in September 2025 reports circulated that detainees held at Kilinto and other facilities had launched a hunger strike over their conditions of detention.

Freedom of Expression (Media Environment and Freedom of the Press)

In June 2025, the founder and editor-in-chief of the online outlet Ethiopia Insider was detained by plainclothes security forces in Addis Ababa on accusations of disseminating false information, and was released five days later.¹³⁹ August 2025 brought four further cases. Three journalists of Sheger FM 102.1, namely the reporter, the editor, and the head of news and programs, were detained following the broadcast of a report on healthcare professionals' pay demands, one of them released the same day after giving a statement. A senior editor of The Reporter was abducted from his home on the outskirts of Addis Ababa by masked gunmen, and both the Addis Ababa and Federal Police Commissions denied that he was in their custody. The host of Ahadu Radio's "Kidame Gebeya" program went missing in Addis Ababa and was later seen accompanying police officers searching his office. In the Somali region, a reporter of the state-owned Somali Regional Television was arrested over a Facebook post featuring community criticism of the regional government, and appeared in court without legal representation.¹⁴⁰

In October 2025, the Ethiopian Media Authority (EMA) suspended nine correspondents of Deutsche Welle's Amharic service for alleged violations of the country's media and hate speech

¹³⁶ Committee to Protect Journalists. (2025). Ethiopia. CPJ. <https://cpj.org/africa/ethiopia/>

¹³⁷ Amnesty International. (2026, May 29). Ethiopian authorities have intensified their crackdown on press freedom. Amnesty International.

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2026/05/ethiopian-authorities-have-intensified-their-crackdown-on-press-freedom/>; Committee to Protect Journalists. (2025). Ethiopia. CPJ. <https://cpj.org/africa/ethiopia/>

¹³⁸ Amnesty International. (2026, April 27). Ethiopia: Journalist abducted, Urgent Action (Index No. AFR 25/0923/2026). Amnesty International.

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/AFR2509232026ENGLISH.pdf>

¹³⁹ Reuters. (2026, February 14). Ethiopia revokes accreditation of Reuters journalists. Reuters.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/ethiopia-revokes-accreditation-reuters-journalists-2026-02-14/>

¹⁴⁰ Figures for 1995 are from the African Elections Database (<http://africanelections.tripod.com/et.html>).

Figures for 2000, 2010, and 2015 are consistent across the African Elections Database, IPU Parline (<https://data.ipu.org/parliament/ET/ET-LC01/election/ET-LC01-E20150524/>) and IFES ElectionGuide (<https://www.electionguide.org/countries/id/70/>).

For 2005 the sources diverge: IPU Parline and ElectionGuide record 27,372,888 registered voters and 82.6 % turnout

(http://archive.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/arc/2107_05.htm), while the African Elections Database records 25,605,851 registered voters excluding the Somali region and gives no turnout figure. CECOE reports the IPU figure and records the divergence. For 2021 no authoritative published series could be verified; the commonly cited figures of 39,395,768 registered voters and 89.07 % turnout derive from NEBE's own results release and are reported here on that basis. Figures for 2026 are as published in the results of the Seventh General Election.

laws, lifting the ban on seven of them in December while permanently barring two. In January 2026, the Authority banned Wazema Radio, citing bias, lack of balance, and incitement, a decision the outlet rejected as unjustified while indicating it would consider legal options. In April 2026, the Authority cancelled the registration of the independent outlet Addis Standard.¹⁴¹ In February 2026, the EMA declined to renew the accreditation of three Addis Ababa-based Reuters journalists and revoked the agency's accreditation to cover the African Union Summit, a decision Reuters stated followed one of its investigative reports.¹⁴² In June 2026, the federal government expelled a French journalist after revoking her press accreditation and residence permit, following a reporting trip to Tigray during which she had interviewed residents about their concerns over the possibility of renewed armed conflict.

In June 2025, a physician at Bahir Dar University Teaching Hospital was arrested and accused of “inciting, mobilizing, and organizing” the health workers’ strike through his social media posts. Human Rights First reported in the same month that Tigrayans in Addis Ababa were subjected to identity-based arrests and detained for days without being brought before a court, and a former State Minister for Peace was re-arrested at his residence on 2 June 2025 following a Federal Supreme Court ruling. Against this backdrop, one legislative development pointed in a more positive direction: a draft amendment to the Freedom of the Mass Media and Access to Information Proclamation No. 590/2000, prepared by the Ministry of Justice and the Ethiopian Ombudsman, was submitted for discussion with media stakeholders on 25 December 2025, with the Ethiopian Media Council submitting recommendations ahead of the draft’s expected transmission to the House of Peoples’ Representatives.

Taken together, the civic space scan indicates an environment that remained formally open in the capital and major urban centers where parties registered, assembled, campaigned, and protested largely without obstruction but that narrowed markedly at the district level and in conflict-affected areas. The obstruction of the founding assemblies of parties that NEBE itself had certified, the arrest and mistreatment of opposition party members in some localities, the suspension of a professional association, and the succession of detentions, bans, cancellations, and expulsions affecting journalists and media outlets together constrained the effective exercise of the freedoms of association, assembly, and expression in the period leading to the Seventh General Elections.

5.1.9. Voter Education, Campaigns, Debates, and Electoral Security Environment and Violence

Voter Education

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Voter education is primarily the responsibility of NEBE. Proclamation 1133/2019, Article 7(2), empowers NEBE to grant permission, follow up on, and supervise Civil Society Organizations and educational institutions engaged in providing voter education. As part of the pre-election environment scanning, CECOE observers reported on the availability, mode of delivery, accessibility, and frequency of these activities.

Availability of Voter Education Activities

Voter education plays a critical role in a democracy by empowering citizens with the knowledge and skills necessary to participate meaningfully in elections. In connection with this, 1,457 (24%) observation reports revealed that voter education activities were conducted solely by NEBE. Another 572 (9%) reports indicated that only civil society organizations were involved, while 615 (10%) reports revealed that voter education activities were conducted jointly by NEBE and CSOs. Smaller proportions were noted for educational institutions alone (117 reports, 2%), NEBE together with educational institutions (131 reports, 2%), CSOs together with educational institutions (99 reports, 2%), and joint efforts by all three actors (326 reports, 5%). However, 2,755 (45%) reports indicated that no voter education was observed or heard in their areas.

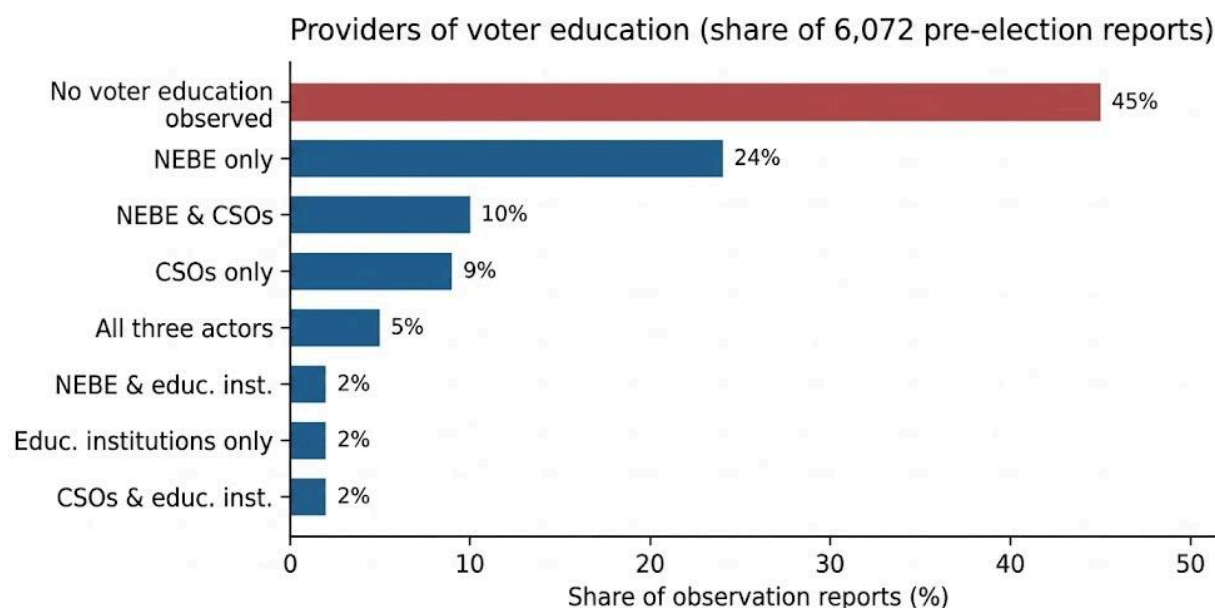


Figure 3: Providers of Voter education (Share of 6,072 pre election reports)

Type, Method, and Frequency of Delivery

Where voter education was observed, the most common response was the use of multiple methods (964 reports, 16%), followed by public meetings/workshops/face-to-face sessions (927 reports, 15%) and television broadcasts (735 reports, 12%). Less frequently, observers reported street fairs (156 reports, 3%), door-to-door outreach (128 reports, 2%), social media/internet

platforms (124 reports, 2%), radio broadcasts (115 reports, 2%), community events (114 reports, 2%), and billboards and printed materials (98 reports, 2%).

Regarding frequency, 770 reports (13%) indicated that voter education was provided every day in their area, 1,676 (28%) once or twice a week, and 654 (11%) just once. In 2,972 reports (49%), no voter education was available to assess.

Language and Accessibility

2,662 reports (44%) confirmed that voter education was provided in local languages. On the other hand, 552 (9%) reported that voter education was provided only in the Federal Working language, with no local language used.

On accessibility for persons with disabilities, 1,142 reports (19%) indicated that voter education was provided in sign language, 37 (0.6%) in Braille, and 737 (12%) in both sign language and Braille. However, 1,245 reports (21%) indicated that voter education was not made accessible through either method.

As to who delivered voter education, 2,211 reports (36%) observed both men and women providing voter education, and 595 (10%) observed men, women, and persons with disabilities. In 264 reports (4%) only men were observed giving voter education, and in 33 (0.5%) only women.

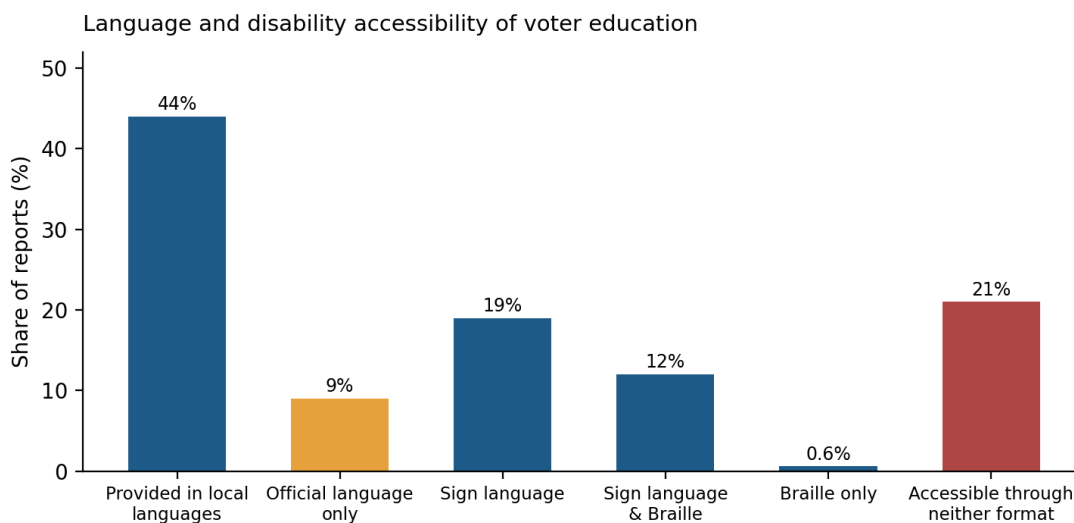


Figure 4- Language and disability accessibility of voter education

Contents of Voter Education about Voter Registration

Observers also reported on the clarity of key registration information. 3,247 reports (54%) indicated that PWDs, elderly persons, and pregnant women were clearly informed of their

priority treatment rights in registration and voting. However, 380 (6%) reports show that these categories of registrants were not informed of their priority treatment rights.

Similarly, 3,052 reports (50%) stated that the option for PWDs, elderly persons, and pregnant women to choose their own assistant was clearly communicated, while 487 (8%) reports indicated that this option was not communicated.

Regarding the registration modalities, 2,643 reports (44%) said the three voter registration methods (self-registration, assisted registration, and manual registration) were clearly explained; 620 (10%) reports indicated that the three modalities were mentioned but not clearly explained, and 523 (9%) that they were not mentioned at all.

Moreover, 3,548 (58%) reports revealed that voter education programs correctly communicated that individuals must be 18 years of age or older on election day to be eligible for registration; 32 (0.5%) reports indicated that this information was communicated incorrectly, and 280 (5%) that it was not mentioned at all.

On documentation, 3,477 reports (57%) said the documentation requirements (Kebele ID, Passport, and National ID) were clearly and correctly explained. 3,365 reports (55%) confirmed that the possibility of registering with substitute documents for voters unable to present a primary identification document was clearly explained, and 3,240 (53%) that registration through witness testimony for undocumented voters was clearly explained; 467 (8%) reported that the witness-testimony option was not explained. Privacy and data-protection protocols for digital registration were clearly explained according to 2,247 reports (37%), while 1,063 (18%) stated they were not explained at all.

Contents of Voter Education about Election Day

Turning to election-day information, 3,009 reports (50%) stated that information on polling day opening and closing times was clearly explained, while 443 (7%) said it was not explained at all. 3,304 reports (54%) indicated that the process for identifying polling stations, both for voter registration and for election day, was clearly communicated.

The step-by-step voting process was clearly explained according to 2,304 reports (38%), but 793 (13%) stated it was not explained. Information on ballot marking and invalid ballots was clearly provided in 2,033 reports (33%), and not provided in 900 (15%). The secrecy of vote casting was clearly explained in 2,136 reports (35%), and not explained in 806 (13%).

Finally, 1,841 reports (30%) indicated that voters were informed how to lodge complaints for both voter registration and election day; 656 (11%) covered only registration complaints and 306 (5%) only election-day complaints, while 940 reports (15%) indicated that complaint procedures were not explained for either.

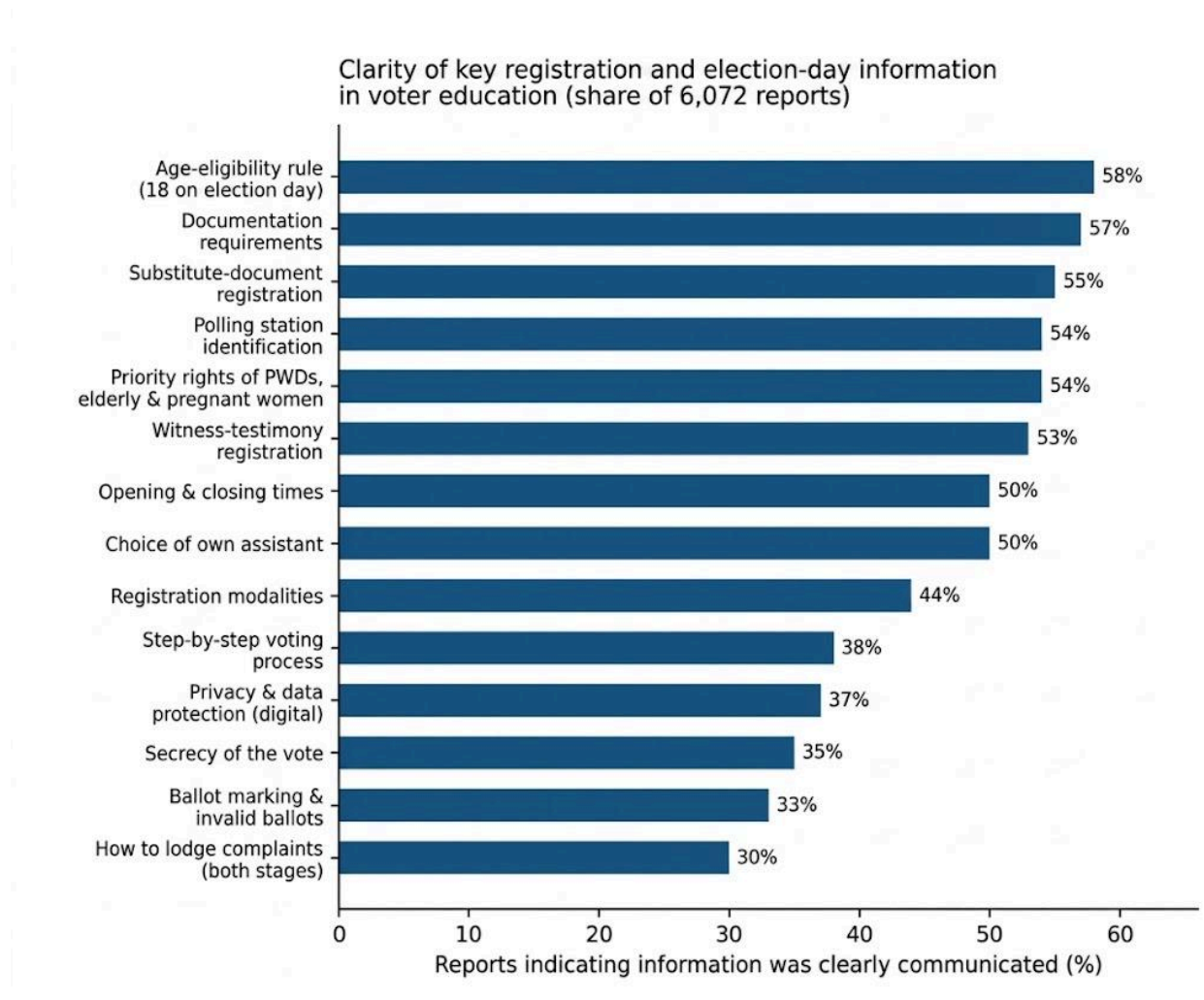


Figure 5- Clarity of key registration and election day information in voter education

Campaign

Campaign activities were widely observed. 3,780 reports (62%) indicated that political campaign activities were seen or heard in the area, while 2,292 (38%) reported none. Where campaigns were reported, the most common response was the use of more than one campaign method (1,427 reports, 24%), followed by media outlets (796 reports, 13%), hall meetings (557 reports, 9%), rallies (555 reports, 9%), social media campaigns (445 reports, 7%), and billboards and prints (109 reports, 2%). Excluding areas where no campaign took place, the average number of political parties campaigning in each area was between two and three.

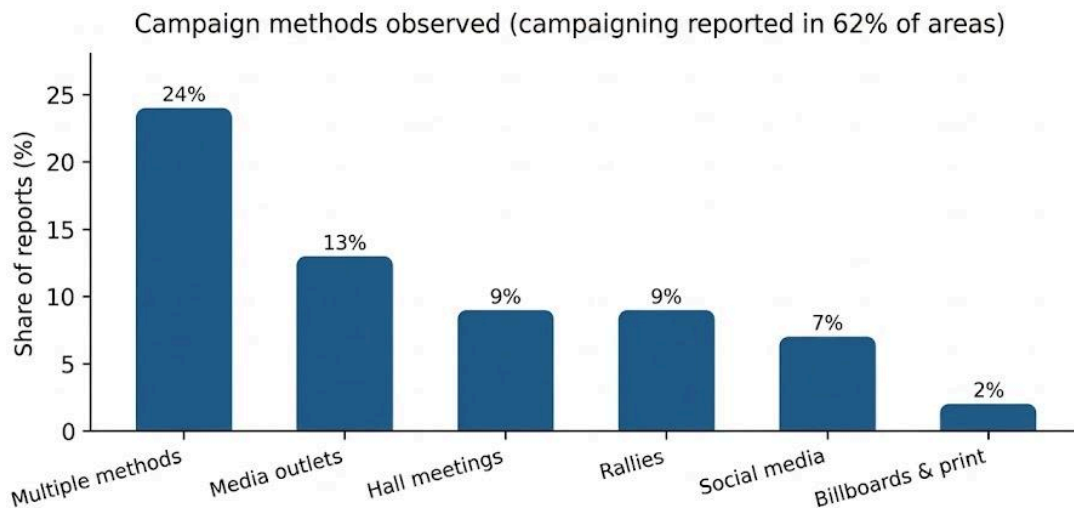


Figure 6- Campaign methods observed (campaigning reported in 62% of areas)

At the same time, observers reported restrictions and irregularities in the campaign. 4,243 (70%) reports showed there were no limits or restrictions on campaigns planned or underway, while 56 reports (0.9%) noted limits or restrictions on campaigns. 19 reports (0.3%) indicated a party disrupting or obstructing the campaign activities of another political party or candidate.

54 reports (0.9%) show campaigns held in prohibited locations. 112 reports (1.8%) noted the use of government vehicles for campaign purposes, while 10 reports (0.2%) observed denial of public assembly halls for campaign use. 18 reports (0.3%) reported the presence of weapons at campaign events, and 20 reports (0.3%) observed use of the name, emblem, or symbol of a religious organization.

A further 25 reports (0.4%) indicated harassment, intimidation, or threats against PWDs or women during the campaign period. These findings show that campaigning was active, but not free from conduct that may undermine fairness and inclusivity. incidents relating to the campaign are presented in the Critical Incidents section below.

Debates

Observers also followed organized candidate debates. 1,937 reports (32%) indicated debates organized by NEBE, 334 (6%) by civil society organizations, 50 (0.8%) by educational institutions, 423 (7%) by NEBE and CSOs jointly, 82 (1%) by NEBE and educational institutions, 44 (0.7%) by CSOs and educational institutions, and 251 (4%) by all three actors together. 2,951 reports (49%) indicated no debate activities were seen or heard. Debates were followed overwhelmingly on television (2,649 reports, 44%), with face-to-face attendance (320,

5%) and radio (183, 3%) far less common. Excluding areas with no debate, about four political parties on average engaged in the debates.

Assessments of debate fairness were largely positive. A total of 2,861 reports, or 47 %, stated that all participants had an equal opportunity to speak, against 275 reports, or 5 %, that stated they did not. Some 2,836 reports, or 47 %, found that the moderators treated all candidates equally, against 286, or 5 %, that found otherwise. A further 2,709 reports, or 45 %, said that moderators posed questions of equivalent difficulty, against 418, or 7 %, and 2,817 reports, or 46 %, confirmed that debate procedures were communicated clearly and consistently to both sides in advance. Two negative findings qualify this picture. Personal attacks by participating parties or candidates during debates were noted in 490 reports, or 8 %, and complaints by participants regarding the conduct or neutrality of the organisers were recorded in 433 reports, or 7 %.

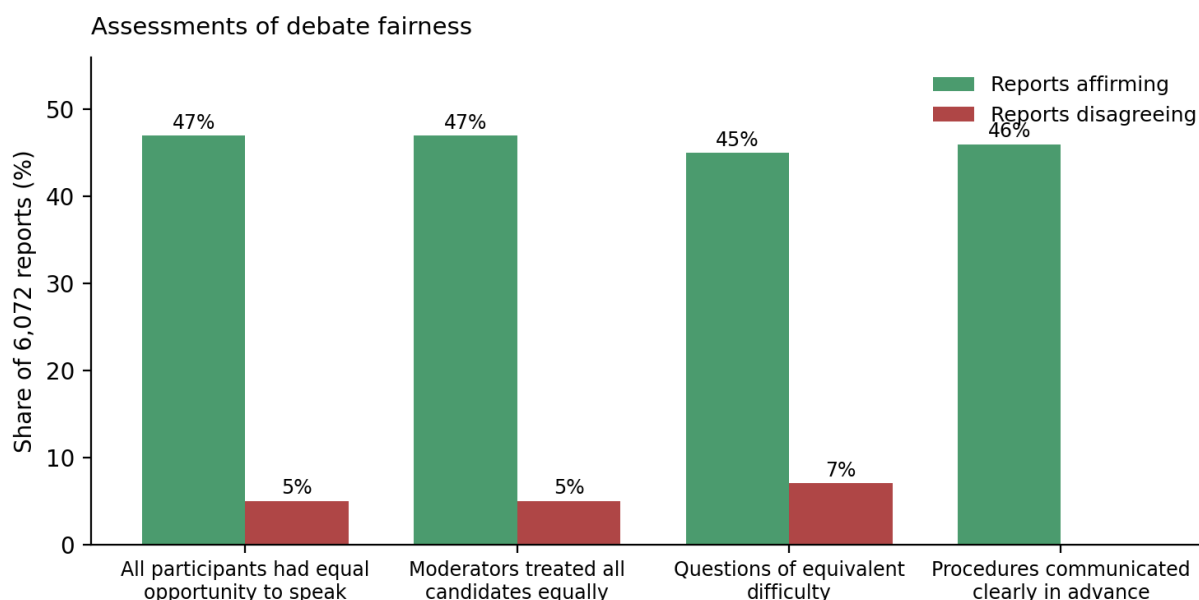


Figure 7- Assessments of debate fairness

False Information, Inflammatory, and Defamatory Language

Observers reported that defamatory or inflammatory language was used against other political parties, candidates, NEBE, citizens, or other groups in 81 reports (1.3%). Incitement to violence or threats to public safety were reported in 28 reports (0.5%), while 64 reports (1.1%) indicated the circulation of false information regarding the election process.

Electoral Security Environment and Violence

Electoral security remained an important concern in some areas. 5,654 reports (93%) showed that the observer did not observe deterioration of the security environment in their area, while 418 reports (7%) indicated deterioration of the security environment. These reports came

principally from the Amhara region (Central Gondar, East Gojam, West Gojam, North Shewa, North Wollo, North Gondar, Awi, Wag Himra, South Wollo, and South Gondar Zones), the Oromia region (Horo Gudru Wollega, East Hararge, East Wollega, West Shewa, West Wollega, North Shewa, Buno Bedele, Arsi, and Ilu Aba Bora Zones), and individual woredas in the Sidama, Somali, Southwest Ethiopia, and South Ethiopia regions.

274 reports (4.5%) reported unusual deployment of armed state or non-state forces, in the following areas:

- Amhara Region: Central Gondar Zone (Tach Armachiho, Gondar Zuria); East Gojam Zone (Awabel, Enarj Enawga, Debay Tilatgen, Gozamin); West Gojam Zone (Bure Zuria, Dega Damot); North Shewa Zone (Mida Woremo, Mojana Wadera, Alem Ketema Town, Ankober, Antsokiya-and-Gemza, Ataye Town, Ensaro); North Wollo Zone (Meket, Raya Kobo, Bugna, Gazo, Gidan); North Gondar Zone (Debark Town); Bahir Dar City (Dagmawi Minilik); Awi Zone (Ayehu Guagusa, Jawi); Wag Himra Zone (Sekota Town, Dehana); South Wollo Zone (Legahida, Sayint Ajbar, Borena, Tenta, Ambasel, Wegde, Delanta); South Gondar Zone (Libo Kemkem, Sedi Muja, Nifas Mewcha, Andabet, Addis Zemen, Ebnet, Dera, Farta).
- Oromia Region: Horo Gudru Wollega Zone (Shambu Town); East Wollega Zone (Sasiga); West Shewa Zone (Gindeberet); West Wollega Zone (Nole Kaba); North Shewa Zone (Hidebu Abote, Kimbibit, Dagam, Fiche Town); Buno Bedele Zone (Meko); Arsi Zone (Hetosa, Lemu-and-Bilbilo, Robe, Tiyo); Ilu Aba Bora Zone (Darimu).
- Sidama Region: Northern Sidama Zone (Wondo Genet). Benishangul-Gumuz Region: Assosa Zone (Mao-Komo Special Woreda) and Metekel Zone (Mandura). Central Ethiopia Region: Hadiya Zone (Soro). Southwest Ethiopia Peoples' Region: Sheka Zone (Andiracha) and Dawro Zone (Loma Bosa). South Ethiopia Region: Gardula Zone (Derashe) and Gofa Zone (Laha Town).

In addition, 447 reports (7%) indicated security threats that could restrict the freedom of movement of political parties and candidates, 113 (1.9%) reported instant searches, and 153 (2.5%) reported the closure of roads. 130 reports (2.1%) recorded harassment or intimidation of voter educators, while 38 reports (0.6%) reported incidents of violence, intimidation, or harassment of citizens, party agents, or members during the campaign. 56 reports (0.9%) noted harassment, threats, or intimidation directed at NEBE officials.

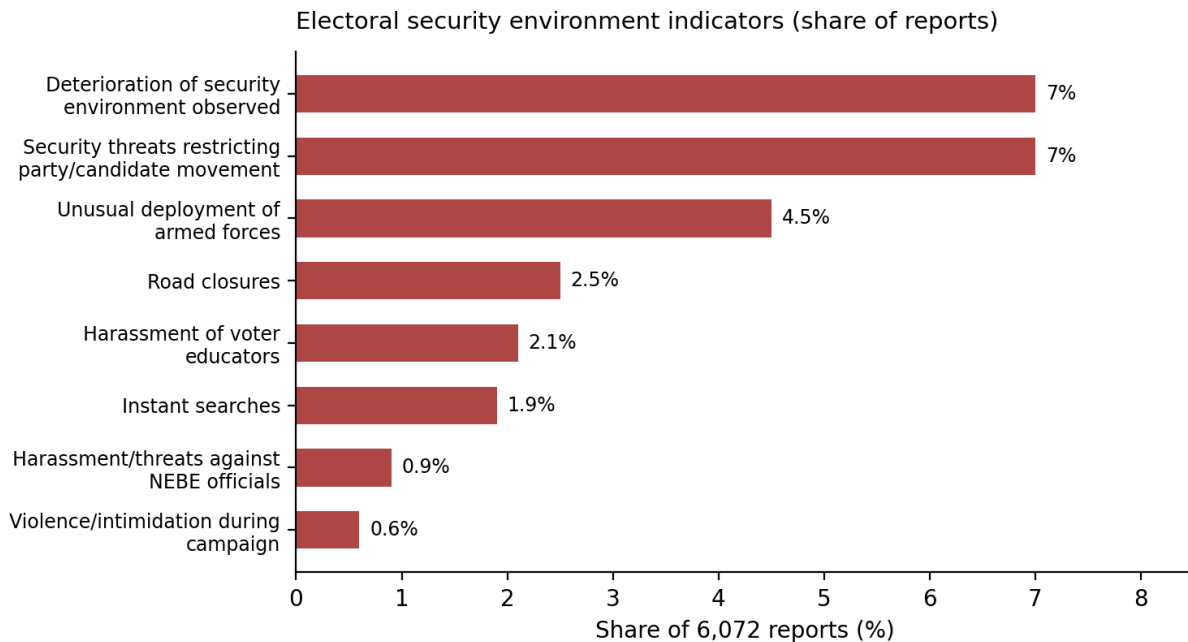


Figure 8- Electoral security environment indicators (share of reports)

Voter Registration

Setup and Accessibility of Registration Centers

The findings listed below relate to the locations where registration stations were established, the availability of election officers and materials, the opening and closing hours of registration stations, the accessibility and suitability of stations for various segments of the community, and whether observers were permitted to enter the registration stations.

- Location of Registration Stations:** Regarding the locations of the registration stations, CECOIE observed that 3,851 (97%) of the manual registration stations and 429 (97%) of the tablet registration stations were established in legally permitted locations. However, 102 (3%) of the manual registration stations and 14 (3%) of the tablet stations were established in prohibited places (such as military sites, police stations, religious institutions, health centers, bars/hotels, political party offices, and private residences).
- Availability of Election Officers:** The law stipulates that at least three (3) election officers must be present at each registration station. CECOIE's observers confirmed that an average of 4 officers were present at the stations observed across both registration options.
- Opening Hours of Registration Stations:** Among the 2,051 manual and 223 tablet registration stations observed during the morning shift, 1,284 (63%) of the manual registration stations and 125 (56%) of the tablet stations commenced the registration process between 2:30 and 3:30 local time (8:30 AM and 9:30 AM standard time). On the other hand, registration started between 3:30 and 6:00 local time (9:30 AM and 12:00 PM

standard time) in 762 (37%) manual registration stations and 98 (44%) tablet stations. In 5 observed manual registration stations, the registration process had not started by midday 6:00 local time (12:00 PM standard time).

- **Election Officers' Lunch Breaks:** In 1,702 (89%) of the observed manual registration stations, the legally designated one-hour (1:00 hour) lunch break was utilized, while in 200 (11%) stations, lunch breaks extended beyond one hour. For tablet registration stations, in 205 (93%) of the observed stations, the one-hour lunch break was used in accordance with the law, while in 15 (7%) stations, the lunch break lasted for more than one hour.
- **Closing Hours of Registration Stations:** Among the 1,902 manual and 220 tablet stations observed during the afternoon shift, findings indicate that 1,686 (89%) of manual and 193 (88%) of tablet registration stations closed between 11:30 and 12:00 local time (5:30 PM and 6:00 PM standard time). Meanwhile, 137 (7%) of manual and 17 (8%) of tablet stations closed after 12:00 local time (6:00 PM standard time). Conversely, 79 (4%) of manual registration stations and 10 (5%) of tablet stations closed before 11:30 local time (5:30 PM standard time).

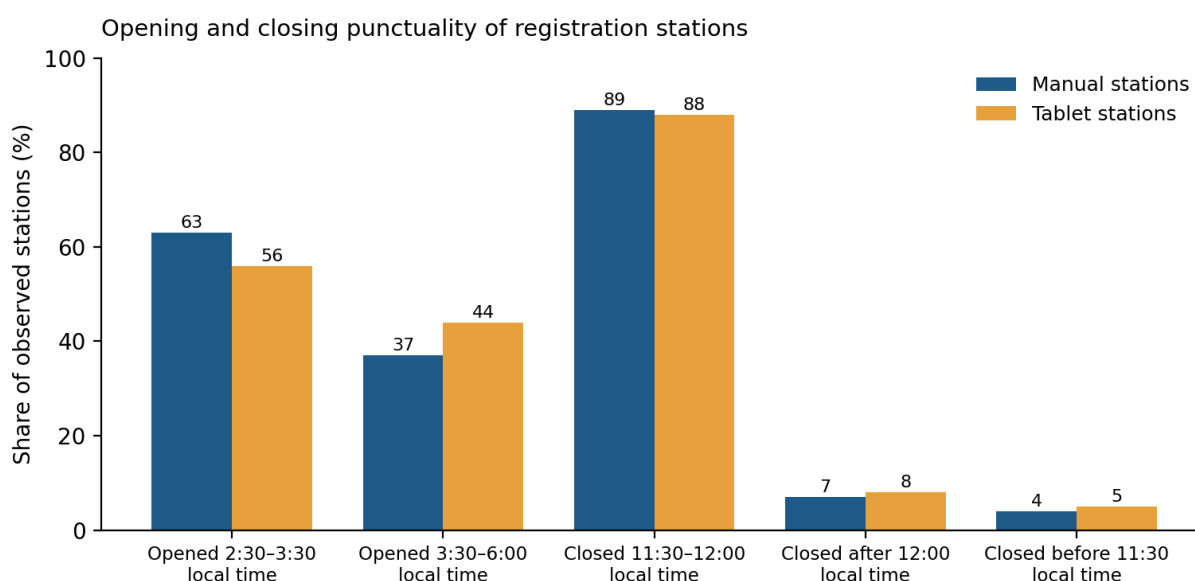


Figure 9- Opening and closing punctuality of registration stations

- **Interruptions in the Registration Process:** In 2,666 (67%) of the observed manual registration stations and 320 (72%) of the tablet registration stations, the registration process was never interrupted. Conversely, in 1,287 (33%) of the manual registration stations and 123 (28%) of the tablet registration stations, registration was interrupted at least once.
- **Sun and Rain Shelters:** Regarding the availability of shelters, 2,324 (59%) of the observed manual registration stations and 268 (60%) of the tablet stations had prepared shelters (shading) to protect registrants from sun/rain. Conversely, 1,629 (41%) of the manual

registration stations and 175 (40%) of the tablet stations did not have shelters protecting registrants from sun and rain.

- **Layout and Security for Female Registrants:** Regarding the convenience of registration station layouts for female registrants in terms of distance from home and safety concerns, 3,563 (90%) of the observed manual registration stations and 400 (90%) of the tablet stations were convenient for women, whereas 390 (10%) and 43 (10%) of the stations, respectively, were not convenient for women.
- **Accessibility for Voters with Mobility Limitations:** Regarding accessibility for registrants with mobility limitations (such as the elderly, pregnant women, or parents with infants/young children), 437 (11%) of the manual registration stations and 88 (20%) of the tablet registration stations observed by CECOIE were accessible to these groups. In contrast, 3,516 (89%) of the manual registration stations and 355 (80%) of the tablet registration stations were not accessible to these community members.
- **Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs):** CECOIE observed that 485 (12%) of the manual registration stations and 103 (23%) of the tablet registration stations allowed PWDs to enter without assistance. However, in 3,468 (88%) of the manual registration stations and 340 (77%) of the tablet registration stations, the setups did not permit PWDs to enter without assistance.
- **Observer Access:** Regarding Coalition observers entering registration stations to observe, they were permitted to enter without any restriction in 3,927 (99%) of the manual registration stations and 430 (97%) of the tablet registration stations. However, in 26 (1%) of the manual registration stations and 13 (3%) of the tablet registration stations, CECOIE's observers were barred from entering.
- **Security Personnel Placement:** We observed that security officers were positioned outside the registration stations in 2,999 (76%) of the manual and 320 (72%) of the tablet registration stations observed by CECOIE.
- **Security Threats and Intimidation:** Regarding threats, violence, intimidation, etc., against registrants, officers, and observers inside or around the registration stations, no such acts occurred in or around 3,942 (99.7%) of the manual and 438 (99%) of the tablet registration stations. However, the listed acts were committed in or around 11 (0.3%) of the manual and 5 (1%) of the tablet registration stations.

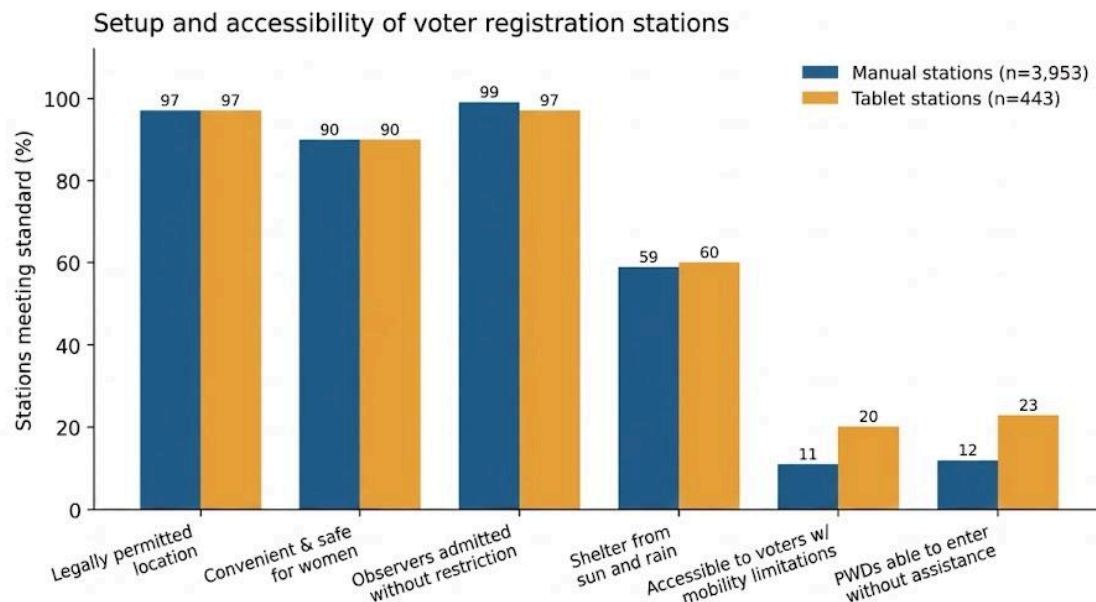


Figure 10- Setup and accessibility of voter registration stations

The Registration Process

The findings listed below cover verifying the identity and residency of registrants, registering through witnesses, entering voter information into the voter register, issuing voter cards to registrants, the presence of unauthorized individuals at registration stations, and proxy registration.

- Verification of Identity and Residency:** According to the law, any registrant must present credentials such as a Kebele ID, passport (even if expired), driver's license, military discharge certificate, student ID, or similar documents as proof for registration. Among the 3,953 observed manual registration stations, 3,451 (87%) registered voters who provided documents proving their identity and residency in accordance with the law. However, in 494 (12%) of the manual registration stations, a number of registrants ranging from one to twenty (1–20) were registered without presenting the aforementioned documents. Additionally, in 8 (0.2%) stations, more than 20 registrants were registered without verifying their identity and residency.
- OTP Transmission in Digital (Tablet) Registration:** In stations where registration was conducted via tablets, registrants with a Fayda National ID must have a One-Time Password (OTP) sent to their registered phone number; for registrants without a Fayda ID, election officers register them by entering their information using the tablet. Accordingly, out of the 443 tablet registration stations observed by CECOIE, 424 (96%) successfully sent the OTP

to registrants' phones without interruption during the time Coalition observers were present. However, in 13 (3%) tablet registration stations, the OTP was not sent to between 1 and 20 registrants. Additionally, in 6 (1%) tablet registration stations, the OTP was not sent to more than 20 registrants' phones.

- **Data Acceptance for Non-Fayda Registrants on Tablets:** Regarding tablet registrants who do not possess a national digital ID (Fayda), in 412 (93%) of the tablet registration stations, CECOE's observers noted that officers successfully entered the information provided by the registrants (name, age, photo, etc.) into the application and it was fully accepted by the system during observation hours. Furthermore, in 26 (6%) tablet registration stations, officers were unable to enter the details of 1 to 20 registrants into the application. In 5 (1%) registration stations, we observed that the system did not accept the credentials submitted for more than 20 registrants.
- **Immediate Issuance of Voter Cards:** In manual registration, the electoral law stipulates that voters must receive their voter cards immediately upon completing registration. In 3,831 (97%) of the manual registration stations observed by CECOE, registrants were given their voter cards immediately after registering. However, in 111 (3%) stations, between one and twenty registrants were not issued voter cards immediately. Additionally, in 11 (0.2%) manual registration stations, more than 20 registrants did not receive their registration cards immediately.
- **Presence of Unauthorized Persons:** Under the electoral law, any entity other than permitted persons specifically, registrants until they complete registration, election board officers and staff, political party agents, and accredited observers is prohibited from being inside the station. Among the stations observed by CECOE, unauthorized persons were not present in 3,870 (98%) of the manual registration stations and 424 (96%) of the tablet registration stations. However, in 83 (2%) of the manual and 19 (4%) of the tablet registration stations, unauthorized entities (such as Kebele leaders and administrators, security personnel, and local political party coordinators) were found inside the stations.
- **Physical Presence / Proxy Registration:** According to the electoral law, any registrant must register in person at the registration station, and proxy (or representative) registration is strictly prohibited. Among the stations observed by CECOE, registrants registered in person in 3,861 (98%) of the manual registration stations and 431 (97%) of the tablet registration stations, while in 92 (2%) of the manual and 12 (3%) of the tablet registration stations, registrants were registered without being physically present.

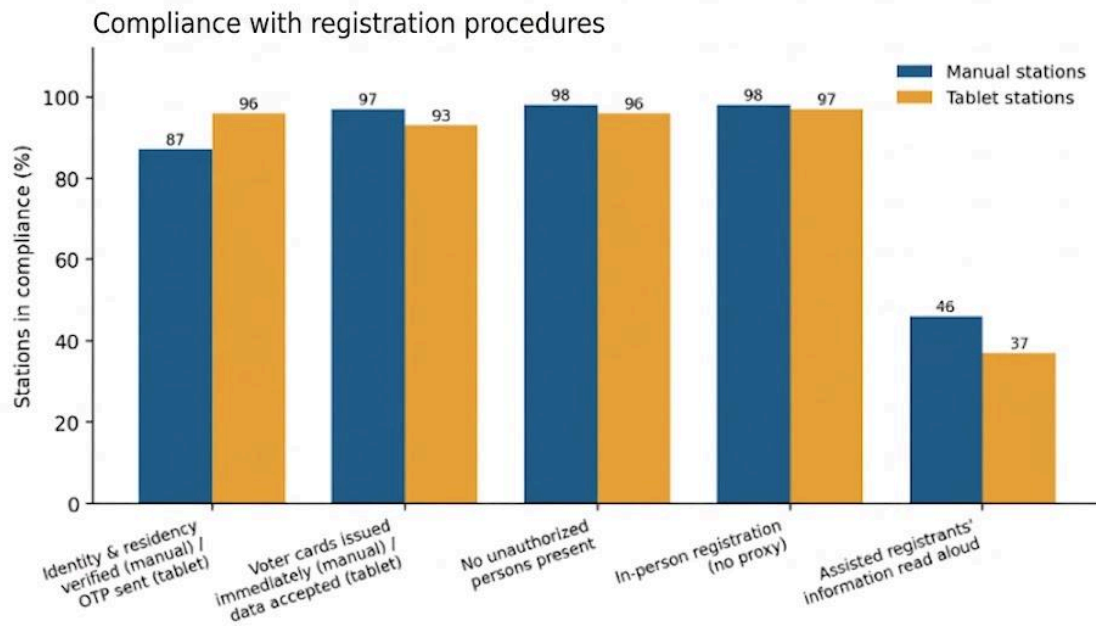


Figure 11- Compliance with registration procedures

Inclusivity

The findings listed below include the gender and disability composition of registration station officers and heads, as well as findings regarding assisted registration.

- Gender and Disability Representation among Election Officers:** Across both registration options, an average of one female officer was present out of the average of four officers at each station. Among the manual registration stations where female officers were deployed, the station head was female in 672 (17%) of the stations. For tablet registration stations, the head was female in 109 (25%) of the stations.
- Officers with Disabilities:** Out of the observed stations, PWDs participated as election officers in 93 (2%) of manual and 15 (3%) of tablet registration stations, and in these stations, election officers with disabilities served as station heads.
- Female Queue Controllers:** Regarding female queue controllers (searchers/friskers), CEEOE observed that 3,839 (97%) of manual and 434 (98%) of tablet registration stations had female queue controllers. In contrast, female queue controllers were not assigned in 114 (3%) of manual and 9 (2%) of tablet stations.
- Assisted Registration Procedures:** The law mandates that for individuals registering with assistance, the information they provide must be read out loud so that both the registrant and the observers can hear it. Accordingly, this was implemented in 1,808 (46%) of the manual

and 162 (37%) of the tablet registration stations observed by CECOE. However, this procedure was not followed in 2,145 (54%) of the manual and 281 (63%) of the tablet registration stations.

Participation of Electoral Stakeholders

The findings listed below cover the presence of observers and political party agents.

- Political Party Agents:** To ensure transparency in the registration process and protect their interests, political parties are expected to deploy NEBE-accredited agents to registration stations. In the stations observed by CECOE, party agents were present in 539 (14%) of the manual and 61 (14%) of the tablet registration stations, whereas party agents were absent in 3,414 (86%) of the manual and 382 (86%) of the tablet registration stations.
- Other Civil Society Observers:** Civil society organizations deploy observers to monitor whether the registration process is inclusive, transparent, and accountable, and to present their findings to the public, the election administration, political parties, and the media. From this perspective, other observers, excluding CECOE's own, were present in 156, or 8 %, of the 1,902 manual stations covered during the afternoon shift, and in 52, or 12 %, of the 443 tablet stations. Other observers were absent in 1,746, or 92 %, of those manual stations and in 391, or 88 %, of the tablet stations.

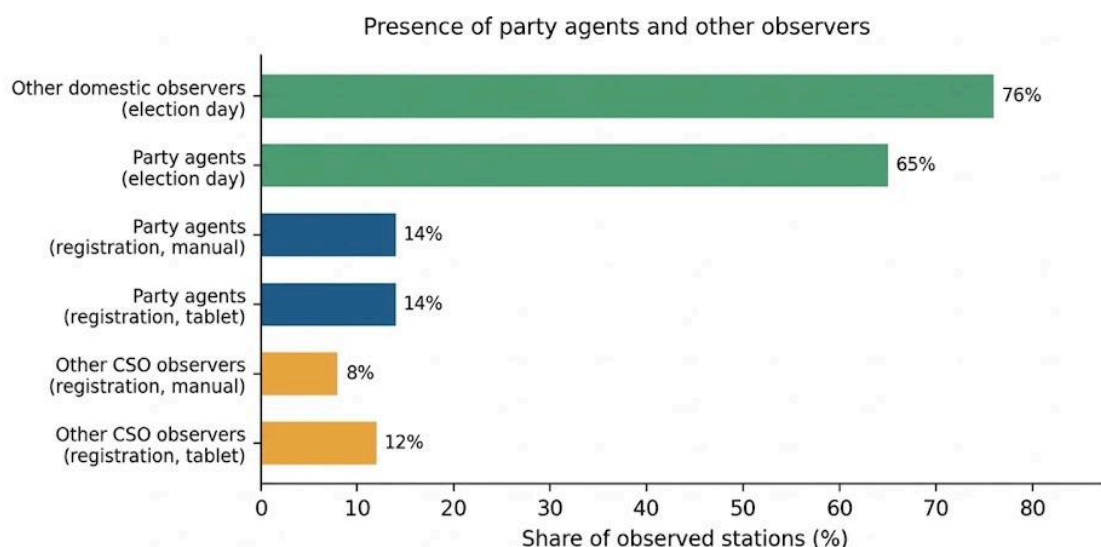


Figure 12- Presence of Party agents and other domestic election observers

Protection of Registration Process:

Findings regarding the deployment and procedures of security personnel to maintain a peaceful registration process, as well as gender-based violence committed against women during the registration process, are included below.

- It was confirmed that security personnel were positioned outside the registration stations in 2,999 (76%) of manual and 320 (72%) of tablet registration stations.
- Regarding the legal prohibition against security forces entering the station without the invitation of the registration station head, unauthorized security forces did not enter the registration station without the invitation of the station head in 3,922 (99%) of manual and 433 (98%) of tablet registration stations. Conversely, unauthorized security forces entered without the station head's invitation in 31 (1%) of manual and 5 (1%) of tablet registration stations.
- Regarding threats, violence, intimidation, etc., against registrants, officers, and observers inside or around registration stations, no such acts occurred in or around 3,942 (99.7%) of manual and 438 (99%) of tablet registration stations. However, the listed acts were committed in or around 11 (0.3%) of manual and 5 (1%) of tablet registration stations.

5.2. Election-Day Findings

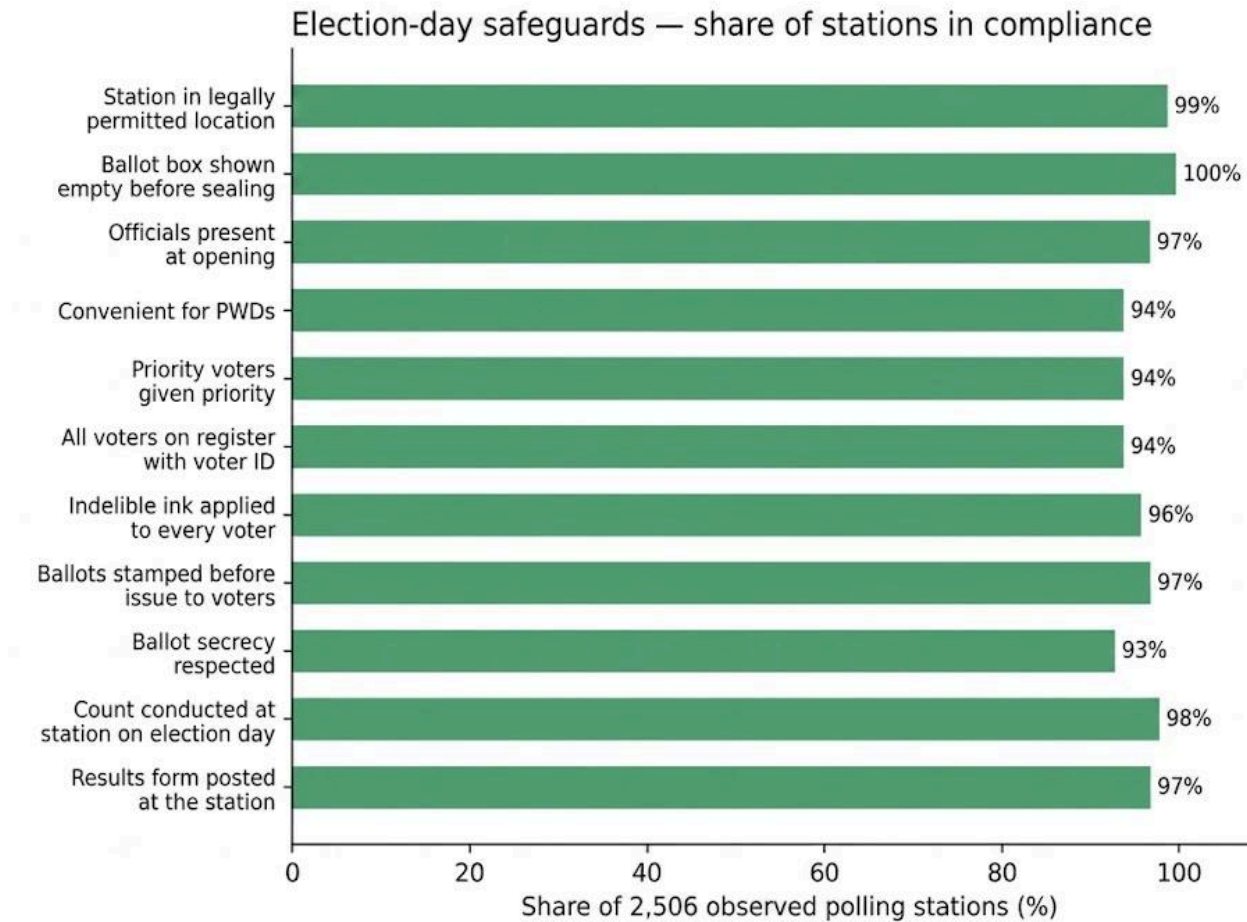


Figure 13- Share of stations in compliance with election day safeguards

5.2.1. Setup and Opening of Polling Stations

- **Locations where polling stations were established:** Under the electoral law, it is prohibited to establish polling stations in military camps, police stations, religious institutions, health facilities, bars or hotels, political party offices, or private residences. Accordingly, 2,490 (99%) were established in legally permitted locations. By contrast, 16 (1%) stations were observed to have been established in legally prohibited locations.
- **Observers being permitted to enter and observe at polling stations:** The electoral law provides that election observers accredited by the Board may enter their assigned polling stations and freely observe the process. At 2,503 (100%) of the stations observers were able to enter and observe without any restriction. By contrast, at 3 polling stations observers were found to have been denied entry.

- **Presence of election officials at the polling stations' opening time:** Election officials are expected to be present before polling stations open at the legally prescribed opening time of 6:00 a.m. This is a precondition for the timely preparation of the station, the arrival of election materials, and the orderly start of the voting process. At 2,428 (97%) the election officials were present when CECO's observers arrived at the station. By contrast, at 55 (2%) polling stations, election officials were not present at the opening time (6:00 a.m.) when CECO's observers arrived. At 23 (1%) stations, observers themselves had not arrived by 5:30 a.m.
- **Number of officials present at polling stations when voting began:** At 2,377 (95%) more than three (3) officials were present and began work. At 102 (4%) stations three (3) election officials were confirmed present, while at 27 (1%) stations fewer than three (3) election officials were observed.
- **Verifying that ballot boxes were empty before being sealed:** At 2,499 (100%) the ballot boxes were shown to be empty before being sealed. By contrast, at 7 (0%) stations it was observed that the ballot boxes were not clearly shown to be empty before sealing. Ballot box seals were present at 2,500 stations, while at 6 stations seals were observed to be unavailable.
- **Completeness of all voting materials:** Ballot papers were present at 2,505 (100%), the Board's official stamp at 2,505 (100%), indelible finger ink at 2,505 (100%), the voters' register at 2,504 (100%), and the Board's ballot boxes at 2,505 (100%) stations. By contrast, the results declaration and reconciliation form was not found at 3 (0%) stations, and the complaint and witness submission form was not found at 38 (2%) stations.
- **Gender and disability composition of election officials:** At 1,508 (60%) stations more than one female election official was present, while at 793 (32%) stations there was one female official. By contrast, at 205 (8%) stations no female election officials were assigned. At 88 (4%) more than one election official with a disability was present. At 247 (10%) stations one official with a disability was present. By contrast, at 2,171 (87%) stations there were no election officials with disabilities.
- **Gender and disability composition of polling station heads:** At 655 (26%) stations the head of the polling station was a woman. Similarly, at 66 (3%) stations women with disabilities served as station heads, and at 76 (3%) stations men with disabilities served as station heads. At 1,709 (68%) stations the station head was a man.

Gender and disability composition of election officials and station heads

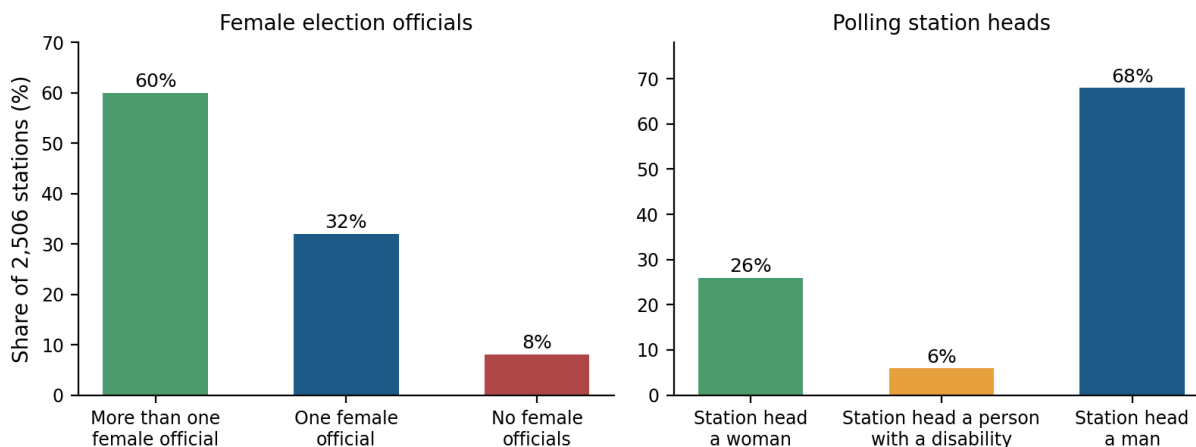


Figure 14- Gender and disability composition of election officials and station heads

5.2.2. The Voting Process

- Observers being permitted to observe the voting process:** At 2,479 (99%) observers were not asked to leave the station during voting. By contrast, at 27 (1%) polling stations CECO's observers were asked to leave the station during voting.
- Start of voting:** Voting began before 6:00 a.m. at 1,091 (44%) stations and between 6:00 and 7:00 a.m. at 1,370 (55%) stations. By contrast, 36 (1%) stations began between 7:01 and 9:00 a.m., 3 stations between 9:01 a.m. and 12:00 noon, and at 6 (0%) stations voting had not begun by 12:00 noon.

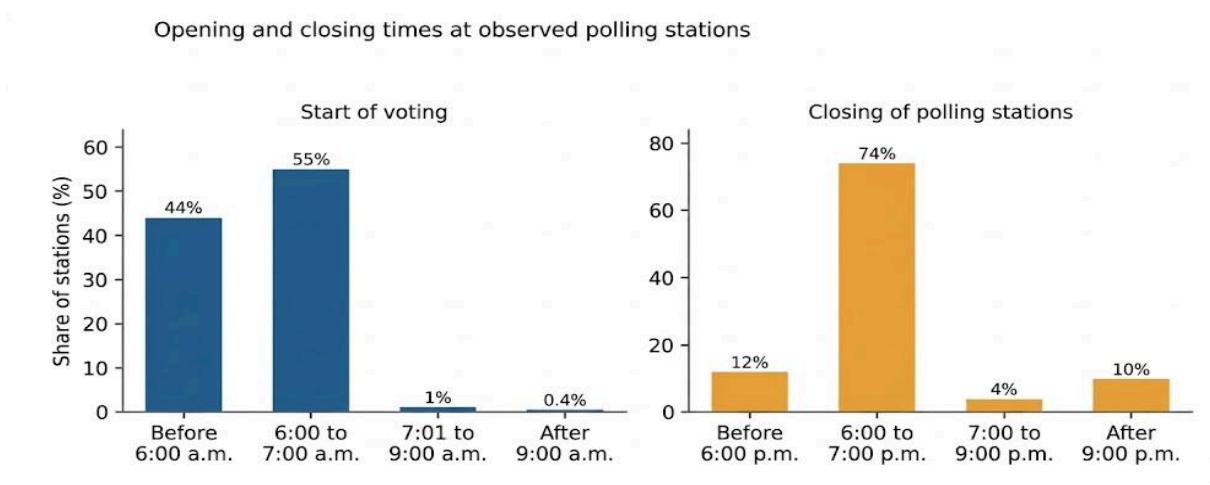


Figure 15- Opening and closing times at observed polling stations

- **Campaign materials or campaigning inside polling stations or within a 200-meter radius:** At 2,495 (100%) no political party campaign materials (posters) or campaign activities were observed inside the polling station or within a 200-meter radius. By contrast, at 11 (0%) stations, campaign materials, items, or campaign activities were observed inside the station or within the 200-meter radius.
- **Accessibility and convenience of polling stations:** Under the electoral law, establishing polling stations in legally permitted locations, ensuring easy accessibility for voters, and the availability of basic election materials are essential for the orderly conduct of the voting process. Accessibility for women, persons with disabilities, the elderly, pregnant women, and parents carrying infants is critical to ensuring the participation of all citizens. Regarding the convenience of polling station locations for women, 2,383 (95%) were convenient for women. By contrast, 123 (5%) polling stations were observed to be inconvenient for women. Regarding accessibility for persons with disabilities, 2,353 (94%) were convenient for persons with disabilities to enter and vote without an assistant, while 153 (6%) stations were observed to be inconvenient for persons with disabilities. 2,399 (96%) were convenient for the elderly, pregnant women, parents carrying infants, and voters with mobility difficulties. By contrast, 107 (4%) polling stations were observed to have problems in this regard.
- **Voters entitled to priority:** At 2,351 (94%) the queue controllers gave priority to the elderly, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, parents carrying infants, and uniformed members of the defense forces and police. By contrast, at 155 (6%) polling stations it was observed that voters entitled to priority were not given appropriate priority.
- **Presence of domestic observers other than CECOE observers:** At 1,908 (76%) other domestic observers were present at the polling station in addition to the Coalition's observers. By contrast, at 598 (24%) polling stations no other domestic observers were present besides CECOE's observers.
- **Attacks, disturbances, intimidation, or harassment at polling stations:** At 2,480 (99%) no attack, intimidation, or harassment against election officials, observers, or political party representatives occurred, while at 26 (1%) stations attacks, disturbances, intimidation, or harassment occurred inside or around the station.
- **Voters not on the voters' register or without voter identification:** At 2,368 (94%) all voters had their names on the voters' register and held voter identification. By contrast, at 130 (5%) polling stations between 1 and 10 people were permitted to vote without their names appearing on the voters' register and without holding voter cards. At 8 (0%) stations, more than 10 such people were permitted to vote.
- **Voters on the register who were not allowed to vote:** At 2,458 (98%) no person whose name appeared on the voters' register was prevented from voting. By contrast, at 46 (2%)

polling stations between 1 and 10 individuals whose names appeared on the register were prevented from voting. At 2 (0%) stations, more than 10 such individuals were prevented from voting.

- **Assistance provided to voters who need support:** At 2,277 (91%) elderly voters, voters with disabilities, or voters unable to read and write were permitted to be assisted by a helper of their own choosing. By contrast, at 32 (1%) polling stations, voters needing support were not permitted to be assisted by a helper of their own choosing. At 197 (8%) stations, no voter in the queue required support.
- **Repeated assistance to voters:** At 2,187 (87%) no person other than the chairperson was seen assisting different voters more than once. By contrast, at 87 (3%) polling stations a person other than the chairperson was observed assisting different voters more than once. At 232 (9%) stations, no voter required support.
- **Voting instructions given by election officials:** At 2,487 (99%) election officials did not advise voters to vote for a particular party or candidate when explaining voting procedures. By contrast, at 19 (1%) polling stations election officials were observed advising voters to vote for a particular party or candidate.
- **Indelible finger ink:** At 2,413 (96%) every voter received indelible finger ink before voting. By contrast, at 87 (3%) polling stations between 1 and 10 voters were permitted to vote without indelible ink on their fingers. At 6 (0%) polling stations, more than 10 voters were permitted to vote without indelible ink.
- **Stamping of ballot papers:** At 2,442 (97%) all ballot papers were stamped before being handed to voters. At 59 (2%) stations CECOE observed that between 1 and 10 ballot papers were handed to voters without a stamp. At 5 (0%) stations, more than 10 ballot papers were handed to voters without a stamp.
- **Secrecy of the ballot:** At 2,337 (93%) the secrecy of the ballot was not violated. By contrast, at 151 (6%) polling stations the secrecy of the ballot of between 1 and 10 voters was observed to have been violated. At 18 (1%) stations, the ballot secrecy of more than 10 voters was violated. This includes situations such as following voters into the secret voting booth or asking to see the marked ballot paper.
- **Placement of ballot boxes:** At 2,502 (100%) the ballot boxes were placed in a clearly visible location. By contrast, at 4 (0%) polling stations the ballot boxes were observed not to have been placed in a clearly visible location.
- **Interruption of the voting process:** At 2,466 (98%) the voting process was not interrupted at any time. By contrast, at 40 (2%) stations the voting process was observed to have been interrupted.

- **Presence of political party agents:** At 1,635 (65%) political party agents were present at the polling station. At 871 (35%) polling stations, political party agents were not present.

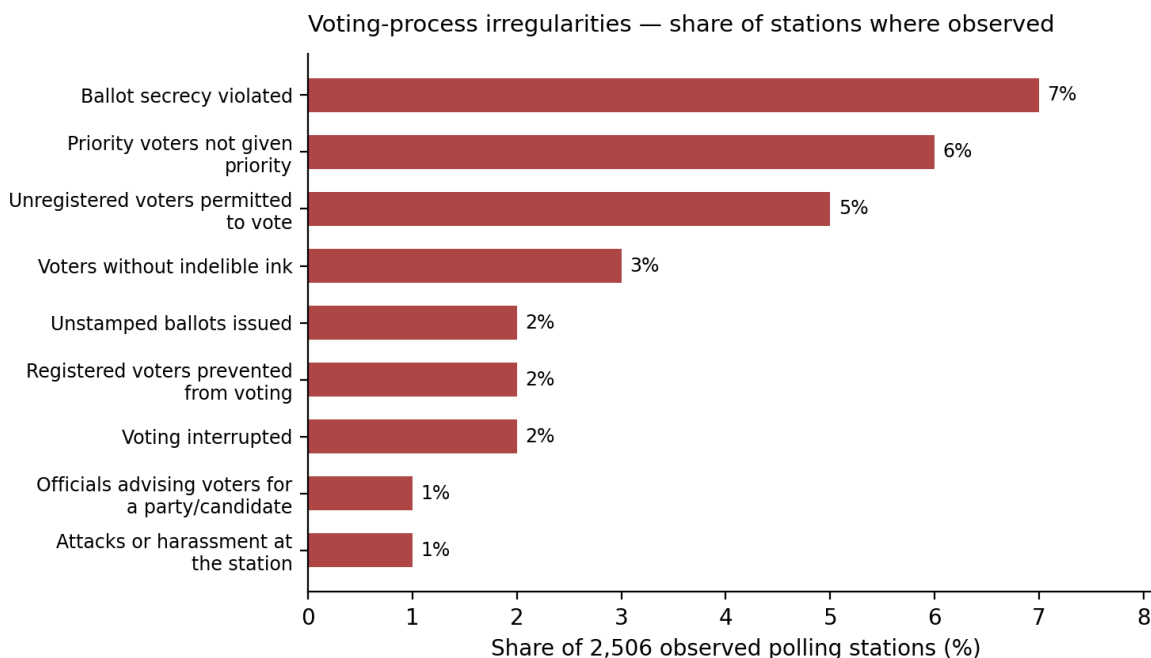


Figure 16- Voting process irregularities- Share of stations where observed

5.2.3. Closing of Polling Stations

Under the law, polling stations must close at 6:00 p.m. However, because many voters were still in the queue at closing time, the Board extended the closing time to 12:00 midnight.

- **Polling station closing time:** 313 (12%) closed before 6:00 p.m. It was observed that 1,848 (74%) polling stations closed between 6:00 and 7:00 p.m., 104 (4%) between 7:00 and 9:00 p.m., and 241 (10%) after 9:00 p.m.
- **Voters in the queue at closing time:** At 780 (31%) there was no one in the queue at closing time. At 1,715 (68%) polling stations, everyone in the queue was able to vote. At 9 (0%) stations, however, some of those in the queue were not permitted to vote. In addition, at 2 (0%) polling stations, none of those in the queue were permitted to vote.

5.2.4. The Vote Counting Process

- **Observers were permitted to observe the counting process:** At 2,490 (99%) CECOE's observers were not asked to leave the station during the count. By contrast, at 16 (1%) polling stations CECOE's observers were asked to leave the station during the count.
- **Place and time of the vote count:** At 2,447 (98%) the count was conducted at the polling station on election day. By contrast, at 59 (2%) stations the count was not

conducted at the station on election day. In addition, at 59 (2%) stations the count was not conducted at the station where the votes were cast.

- **Interruption of the vote count:** At 2,446 (98%) the count proceeded without interruption. By contrast, at 34 (1%) polling stations the counting process was interrupted. At 26 (1%) stations the count was not conducted at the station at all.
- **Interference or intimidation during the count:** At 2,468 (98%) there was no interference or intimidation during the count. By contrast, at 12 (0%) stations interference or intimidation during the count was observed. At 26 (1%) stations, no count took place at the station where the votes were cast.
- **Displaying the marks made on ballot papers:** At 2,415 (96%) the ballots were counted with the voters' marks clearly displayed. By contrast, at 65 (3%) stations ballots were counted without clearly displaying the voters' marks. At 26 (1%) stations the count was not conducted at the station.
- **Separating valid and invalid ballot papers:** At 2,462 (98%) the election officials followed a consistent procedure for separating valid and invalid ballot papers. By contrast, at 16 (1%) stations officials did not follow a consistent procedure for separating valid and invalid ballots. At 28 (1%) stations, no count was conducted at the polling station.
- **Marks made on ballot papers by election officials:** At 2,407 (96%) election officials were not seen marking ballot papers. By contrast, at 77 (3%) polling stations election officials were observed marking ballot papers. At 22 (1%) stations, no count was conducted at the polling station.
- **Formal complaints submitted to the polling station head:** At 2,451 (98%) no complaint was submitted to the station head during the opening, voting, counting, or declaration of results. By contrast, at 55 (2%) polling stations complaints were submitted to the station head during the opening, voting, counting, or declaration of results.

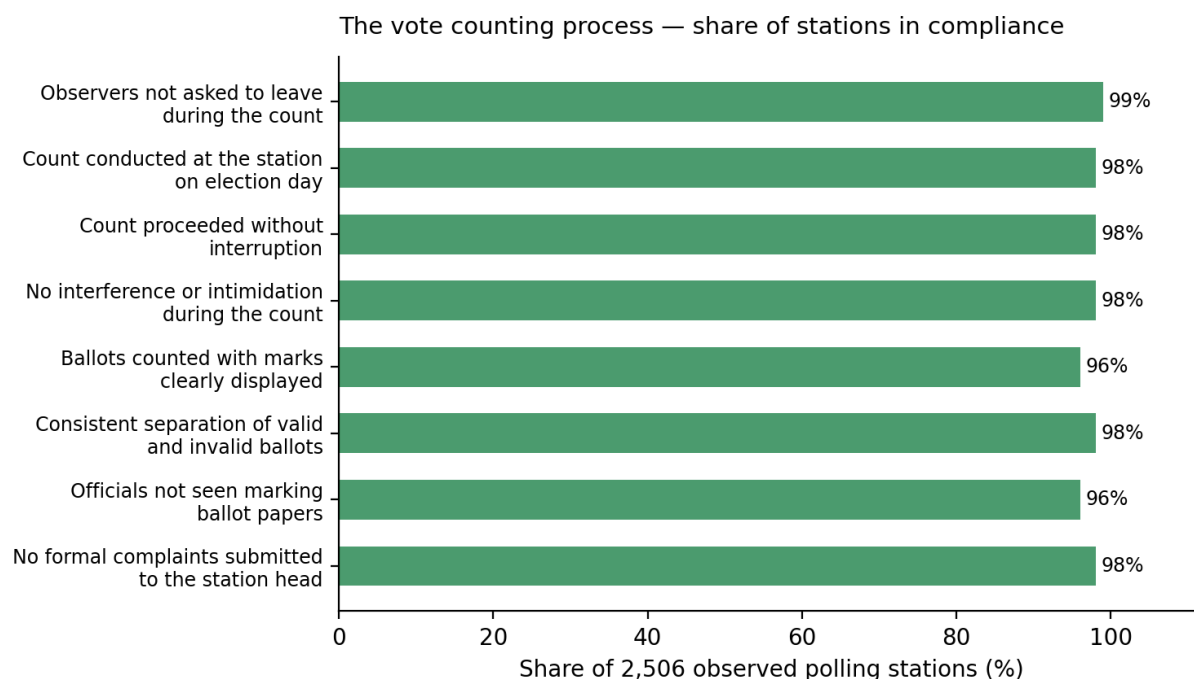


Figure 17- The vote counting process- share of stations in compliance

5.2.5. Official Posting of Results at the Polling Station Level

Under Proclamation No. 1162/2019 the result of the count must be entered on the results declaration and reconciliation form and a copy of that form affixed to the door of the polling station for public viewing. At 2,440 (97%) a copy of the results declaration and reconciliation form was posted on the station door for public viewing. At 40 (2%) polling stations, a copy of the results declaration and reconciliation form was not posted on the station door for the public. At 26 (1%) stations, the count was not conducted at the station where votes were cast.

5.3. Post-Election Findings

5.3.1. Post-Election Violence and Protests

The announcement of results was, in the great majority of observed areas, not accompanied by violence. Of the 395 reports received, 380 (96%) indicated no incidents of violence or intimidation related to the announcement of the election results, while 15 (4%) reported such incidents. Where violence or intimidation was reported, the most frequently identified targets were polling officials or NEBE officials (5 reports), followed by other targets (2), and political parties or candidates, voters, and civil society actors (1 report each). Two reports (1%) indicated disruptions to public services, bodily harm, or death resulting from post-election violence or protests.

Peaceful contestation of the results was rare: only 4 reports (1%) recorded peaceful protests or demonstrations in response to the election results, while 390 (99%) recorded none. Hate speech, derogatory, or intimidating language in the post-election period was reported in 14 reports (4%), with 381 (96%) reporting none.

5.3.2. Public Opinion on the Election Results

Observers assessed the tone and content of media coverage related to the announcement of results as neutral in 95% of reports (321), biased in 4% (14), and as carrying misinformation in 1% (3). Media broadcasting of exaggerated reports, distorted facts, or falsehoods on the results was reported in 6% of reports (22). The general public sentiment towards the election results was assessed as positive in 65% of reports (220), neutral in 26% (87), and negative in 10% (33).

As to the reaction of political contestants, 48% of reports (164) recorded statements by political parties or candidates calling for calm, 45% (151) recorded no statements at all, and 7% (24) recorded allegations of fraud. Community discussions about the election results, such as hall meetings, were reported in 28% of reports (93). Formal complaints lodged about the results of the election were reported in 9% of reports (29), while 91% (309) reported none.

5.3.3. Restrictions on the Civic Space

Reported restrictions on the civic space in the post-election period were limited but not absent. Restrictions on the freedom to assemble were reported in 4% of reports (13) and restrictions on freedom of expression in 2% (8). Incidents of detention were reported in 3% of reports (10). Where detentions were reported, the most frequently identified targets were NEBE or polling officials (12 reports), followed by political parties or candidates (5), citizens (3), civil society actors (2), and observers (1). The prominence of election officials among the targets of both post-election intimidation and detention is consistent with the pattern of pressure on electoral staff documented throughout the pre-election and election-day phases, and warrants continued attention by the authorities.

5.3.4. Official Results of the Election

According to the results summary published by NEBE on its official website, 54,057,861 citizens were registered to vote in the Seventh General Election, of whom 51,734,193 (95 %) cast their ballots and 5 % did not. The Board reported 51,705,279 ballot papers used, 11,334,944 unused, and 320,781 ballot papers put out of use. The Board notes that these figures other than the number of registered voters exclude the constituencies undergoing recounts and re-elections.

For the House of Peoples' Representatives, the Board's published summary declares winners for 486 of the chamber's 547 seats; no results are included for the deferred Tigray constituencies (38 seats) or the other constituencies where voting was suspended or is being re-run. The ruling Prosperity Party won 438 of the 486 declared seats (90%). Sixteen other parties and eight

independent candidates share the remaining 48 seats, with opposition representation concentrated in the southern regions, Amhara, and Somali: EZEMA won 13 seats (7 of them in South Ethiopia), the National Movement of Amhara 6, Medrek 3 (all in Sidama), the Amhara Democratic Force Movement 3, the Freedom and Equality Party 3, and the Cooperation for Ethiopian Unity 2, while ten further parties among them the Ogaden National Liberation Front, the Somali Federalist Party, the Gumuz People's Democratic Movement, the Afar People's Party, the Wolaita People's Democratic Front, the Gedeo People's Democratic Organization, and the Peace for Ethiopia Coalition won one seat each. Independent candidates won five seats in Oromia and one each in Central Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, and South Ethiopia.

Table 7: Seats declared for the House of Peoples' Representatives by party (NEBE results summary)

Party / candidate type	HoPR seats won
Prosperity Party	438
Ethiopian Citizens for Social Justice (EZEMA)	13
National Movement of Amhara (NaMA)	6
Ethiopian Federal Democratic Unity Forum (Medrek)	3
Amhara Democratic Force Movement	3
Freedom and Equality Party	3
Cooperation for Ethiopian Unity	2
Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF)	1
Somali Federalist Party	1
Unity for Democracy and Freedom Party	1
Gumuz People's Democratic Movement	1
Afar People's Party	1
New Generation Party	1
Peace for Ethiopia Coalition	1
Wolaita People's Democratic Front	1
Gedeo People's Democratic Organization	1
Argoba Unity party	1
Independent candidates	8
Total seats declared	486

Table 9: Seats declared for the Regional Councils by party (NEBE results summary)

Party / candidate	Seats won
Prosperity Party	2,410
Ethiopian Citizens for Social Justice (EZEMA)	73
Freedom and Equality Party	35
Peace for Ethiopia Coalition	34
Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF)	20
Gumuz People's Democratic Movement	14
Ethiopian Federal Democratic Unity Forum (Medrek)	11
Cooperation for Ethiopian Unity	6
Hadase Party	5
Benishangul People's Liberation Movement	5
One Ethiopia Democracy Party	4
Amhara Democratic Force Movement	4
Afar Liberation Front Party	4
Wollo Peoples Democratic Party	4
Sidama Unity Party	3
New Generation Party	3
National Movement of Amhara (NaMA)	3
Afar People's Party	3
Wolaita People's Democratic Front	3
Wolaita People's Liberation Movement	3
Gogot for Guraghe Unity and Justice Party	3
Somali Federalist Party	2
Argoba Unity Party	2
Ethiopian National Unity Party	2
Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)	2
Wolaita National Movement	2
Gedeo People's Democratic Organization	2
Balderas for True Democracy	1

Unity for Democracy and Freedom Party	1
Harari Democratic Organization	1
All Sidama People's Democratic Unity Party	1
Western Somali Democratic Party	1
Sidama People's Unity Democratic Organization	1
Qimant Democratic Party	1
Ethiopian Democratic Union	1
Kosh Peoples National Movement	1
Welene People's Democratic Party	1
Independent candidates	9
Total seats declared	2,681

The Board's published summary also declares the results of the regional and city council contests. Across the thirteen regional states and city administrations, 2,681 regional council seats were declared, out of the 2,700 recorded; the difference of nineteen lies in the constituencies still subject to recount or re-election. The Prosperity Party won 2,410 of the declared regional council seats, or 89.9 %, marginally below the 90.1 % it took of the declared HoPR seats. Thirty-six other parties and nine independent candidates share the remaining 271. The largest opposition holdings are EZEMA with 73 seats, the Freedom and Equality Party with 35, the Peace for Ethiopia Coalition with 34, the Ogaden National Liberation Front with 20, the Gumuz People's Democratic Movement with 14 and Medrek with 11. Independent candidates won four regional council seats in Oromia and one each in Harari, Somali, Benishangul-Gumuz, Addis Ababa and South Ethiopia.

Two features of the council results bear on the findings of this report. The first is that the regional council contests admitted a wider range of parties than the House contest did. Seventeen parties won at least one seat in the House of Peoples' Representatives; thirty-seven won at least one regional council seat, and twenty of those thirty-seven hold council seats without holding a single seat in the House. Parties with a concentrated regional base are represented in the councils and absent from the federal, among them the Benishangul People's Liberation Movement, the Hadase Party, One Ethiopia Democracy Party, the Afar Liberation Front Party, the Wollo Peoples Democratic Party, the Sidama Unity Party and Gogot for Guraghe Unity and Justice. The second is that the geography of that representation runs in the same direction as the rest of this report's findings. Opposition parties and independents together hold 19 % of the declared regional council seats in South Ethiopia, 16 % in Central Ethiopia and about 15 % in Somali, Addis Ababa and South West Ethiopia, but 6 % in Amhara and 1 % in Oromia, where they hold five

seats out of 528. Oromia is the extreme case on either measure: three groupings hold its 528 council seats, the Prosperity Party, EZEMA with one seat and four independents, against eleven each in Amhara and Addis Ababa. The region in which the largest number of electoral areas went uncontested (Section 5.1.5) is therefore also the one whose council returned both the smallest opposition share and the narrowest range of parties.

5.3.5. Electoral Complaints and Dispute Resolution

This section examines the formal complaints lodged with the National Election Board of Ethiopia over the Seventh General Election and the manner in which the Board resolved them. It is based on the Board's own register, the List of Complaints Submitted on the 7th General Election, a forty-two-page record, in Amharic, of 119 complaints concerning voting, vote counting, and the announcement of results, together with the decision the Board rendered on each.

The legal architecture within which these complaints were decided was substantially renewed ahead of the vote. Under Proclamation No. 1162/2019 as amended by Proclamation No. 1394/2025, the former grievance hearing committee at the polling station level was dissolved in favor of direct submission to the polling station head, subject to a formal conflict-of-interest disclosure. At the constituency level, the process was restructured around a three-member grievance hearing committee chaired by the head of the constituency and including two publicly elected members. Any party dissatisfied with a committee's decision reserved the right to appeal to successive levels, up to and including the courts. The electoral calendar allotted a compressed window, from 2 to 9 June 2026, for complaints, tabulation, and certification. The register examined here sits at the apex of that structure. It records the cases that reached the Board itself, most of them seeking the annulment of results, the holding of re-elections, recounts, or administrative and criminal measures against election officials. Complaints arising at earlier stages of the cycle, concerning candidate registration, the campaign, or voter registration, were in the main handled through other channels and are treated in the preceding sections of this chapter.

NB. All dates in the register are given in the Ethiopian calendar.

5.3.5.1. The Complaint Caseload

The Board received 119 complaints spanning all stages of the election, with the majority concentrated on vote processing. Post-voting procedures—specifically vote counting and the treatment of results—accounted for 57 cases (48%), while alleged vote-casting irregularities comprised another 31 (26%). The remaining cases involved observer and party-agent access, registration issues, campaign conduct, and security grievances. Most of the complaints came from the same few locations. The Somali region alone generated 24 complaints (20 %), South Ethiopia 21 (18 %), and Amhara 17 (14 %); Central Ethiopia followed with 12, Sidama with 10, and Benishangul-Gumuz with 9. No complaint in the register originates from Harari or Dire Dawa. The distribution of complaints and their disposition by region is presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Complaints and outcomes by region, NEBE register of the Seventh General Election

Region	Complaints	Dismissed	Partially upheld	Other outcome
Somali	24	17	6	1
South Ethiopia	21	15	3	3
Amhara	17	12	3	2
Central Ethiopia	12	7	4	1
Sidama	10	6	4	0
Benishangul-Gumuz	9	2	7	0
Gambella	7	6	1	0
South West Ethiopia	6	2	3	1
Oromia	5	2	1	2
Addis Ababa	5	5	0	0
Afar	2	1	1	0
Not stated	1	1	0	0
Total	119	76	33	10

To understand these numbers, consider the massive size of the election: 51,026 polling stations across 547 constituencies. Keep in mind, too, that individual complaints often targeted dozens of polling stations at once. The Oromo Liberation Front's sole filing spanned twenty-four constituencies. A complaint in Dolo Ado, in the Somali region, contested 86 stations, and one in Halaba one, in Central Ethiopia, listed stations across four pages of the register. A complaint in Werejarso covered all 93 stations of the constituency. Therefore, these 119 complaints actually cover far more polling stations than the number alone suggests.

5.3.5.2. Complainants

Political parties made most of the complaints: 100 of the 119 complaints (84 %) were filed by parties or their coalitions, six by independent candidates, eleven by individual citizens, nearly all of them in the Somali region, one by a civic association, and one by a complainant the register does not name. Among parties, the caseload was led by the opposition.

The Freedom and Equality Party was the register's most frequent complainant with 15 filings, or 13 %, nine of them in Amhara and the remainder in Addis Ababa, Central Ethiopia, and South

Ethiopia. The Selam for Ethiopia Coalition filed nine complaints in its own name and further cases jointly or through member parties, including the Gambella Peoples' Democratic Movement and the Mocha Democratic Party. Gogot for Gurage Unity and Justice filed eight, almost all of them in the Gurage-area constituencies of Central Ethiopia. EZEMA filed seven and one more complaint with the Selam for Ethiopia Coalition, Hibret for Democracy and Freedom filed six, and the Kush Peoples' National Movement filed five. Three Sidama-based formations together accounted for eleven complaints. The ruling Prosperity Party was itself a complainant in six cases, including the case that produced one of the register's three re-vote orders.

The pattern of the results looks like the following. Every one of the eleven complaints filed by individual citizens was dismissed. Independent candidates fared markedly better: of their six complaints only one was dismissed outright, and they include the register's single instance of a constituency-level annulment with a re-election ordered. In Soro 01, party complaints saw moderate success rates, though 63 of the 100 were ultimately dismissed. This difference shows that organized groups with staff, local agents, and good evidence found it much easier to meet the official rules than everyday citizens acting alone.

5.3.5.3. The Board's Decisions and Remedies

The Board dismissed 76 of the 119 complaints, or 64 %, in their entirety. It partially upheld 33, or 28 %, resolved five administratively, principally following withdrawal by the complainant, and fully upheld three, ordering re-votes or recounts. One case was referred for further investigation, and another was dismissed/rejected. The dismissals rest on a small and recurring set of grounds. The first is that the complainant did not present sufficient evidence. The second is that no written complaint had been lodged contemporaneously with the polling station or the constituency grievance committee. The third is that the officials alleged to have committed violations were not identified by name. The fourth is that witness testimony was contradictory.

The decision in Meskan and Mareko 2 is characteristic: the Board rejected the complainant of Gogot for Gurage Unity and Justice Party (Gogot) because the party had not proven violations in the 57 stations it named, because its witnesses had not complained to the grievance committees present at the stations at the time, and because its photographic evidence showed no more than ordinary polling-station activity.

Where complaints were partially upheld, the Board's characteristic remedy was surgical rather than restorative: the results of specific tainted polling stations were annulled and excluded from the constituency tally, while the request for a constituency-wide re-election was refused. Twenty-eight decisions ordered administrative measures against election officials. A further twenty-two directed that the officials implicated, and in several Somali-region cases the woreda and kebele leaders themselves, be referred to the police and the public prosecutor or otherwise held criminally accountable; several of those decisions cite Article 148 of Proclamation No. 1162/2019 expressly. The Board also took action on its own initiative, even when dismissing a

formal complaint. In disposing of the OLF's multi-constituency filing, it relied on its own reports to order recounts across several locations: 45 polling stations in Welmera, 20 in Shambu, and 57 in Alibo—where 56 stations showed result discrepancies and one ballot box had gone uncounted.

5.3.5.4. Notable Cases

Four clusters of cases illustrate the register's range. In Soro 01 (Central Ethiopia), on the complaint of the independent candidate Dr. Habtamu Tamrat, the Board found it established by witness and documentary evidence that serious violations had been committed, including breaches of ballot secrecy and campaigning by officials and government leaders who incited voters, under the guise of security, to vote for the ruling party; the result was annulled and a re-election ordered, and the legal and ethical violations were directed to investigation for administrative and criminal action.

In Tembaro (South Ethiopia), the Board's own technical report confirmed a significant counting and result-completion discrepancy at 34 polling stations, and, finding that the violations either altered the result or destroyed the credibility of the process, it ordered a re-election on the complaint of the Donga People's Democratic Organization. In Burji (South Ethiopia), on a complaint by the Prosperity Party, the Board confined the repeat election to the single polling station of Denbech.

The findings appear in the partially upheld cases. In Halaba 1 (Central Ethiopia), on a complaint of the Freedom and Equality Party, the Board recorded allegations that election officials at three stations expelled observers with the aid of militia and police, confiscated phones, completed the minutes themselves, and filled in close to 400 ballot papers; the Board excluded the affected results from the tally and, characterizing the conduct as criminal, directed referral for prosecution, while nonetheless refusing the constituency-wide re-election sought. In Segeg and Guradamole (Somali), the Board excluded the results of the named stations and ordered that the woreda and kebele leaders be held criminally accountable, a notable instance of the Board reaching beyond its own temporary staff to local government officeholders. Decisions of this pattern, exclusion of results, administrative measures, and criminal referral, recur across Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambella, Sidama, and Afar.

5.3.5.5. Assessment

Measured against past practice, the register itself is an advance. The Board provided CECOE with a physical record of the caseload, documented on a case-by-case basis alongside the specific reasoning for each determination, its disposition of every complaint before it, including findings that its own officials had committed criminal conduct, and it demonstrated a willingness, in at least a third of cases, to annul tainted station results, sanction officials, and in three instances order fresh voting. The decisions follow a clear pattern: the Board addressed each requested remedy one by one. Furthermore, because the Board ordered recounts on its own, even in areas

where the filed complaints failed, it proved it was actively protecting election quality, not just relying on what the parties brought before it.

Three features nonetheless qualify that assessment. First, the evidentiary threshold is not clear. Complaints were often thrown out simply because there was no written report filed at the polling station on election day. However, CECOE's observation report (section 5.4.11.19) showed that polling staff actually refused to give out complaint forms, accepted complaints only verbally without writing them down, and even kicked party agents and observers out during the vote counting. A standard that demands documentation from the very process whose custodians are accused of obstructing documentation risks penalizing complainants for the process's own failures. Second, the register only tracks actions that have been started, not their final results. While it logs cases sent to police, prosecutors, or management for discipline, it does not show what actually happened to them.

5.4. Critical Incidents Occurring Pre-Election, on Election Day, and Post-Election

The findings presented so far describe the election in aggregate. This section descends to the ground and follows the process as CECOE's observers experienced it, from the first weeks of voter registration to the small hours of the morning after polling day, when the last contested counts were finished. It is a record of specific places, dates, and people: the stations that opened in church compounds and police camps, the officers who worked alone because their colleagues were farming or had fled, the observers who were turned away, arrested, or quietly admitted after an argument, and the ballot boxes that left their stations sealed and unwatched. Each account below was reported by an accredited CECOE observer and passed through the verification process described in Section 4.8. Together they tell the story of an election that proceeded calmly at most of the stations CECOE could see, and of what happened at the margins where it did not.

5.4.1. Attacks, Killings, and Abductions Targeting Election Officials

In Debre Markos Town (East Gojam Zone, Amhara Region), an armed group attacked the Aba Bizuneh Gurd polling station in kebele 09 at about 9:00 a.m. on March 25, 2026, killing one male and one female election official and abducting a third; killings of voters present at the site and of security personnel were also reported. In Awabel Woreda of the same zone, an election official in kebele 02 was abducted on March 16, 2026 by armed actors opposed to the holding of the election and forced to release a video message on his own TikTok account stating that he "repented" of serving as an election official and that the election should not take place.

In Dehana Woreda (Wag Himra Zone), an armed group seized the head of polling station 0308706121301, the deputy head of the woreda education office, and a kebele sub-municipality head at about 1:00 a.m. on April 15, 2026. The education official was shot in the thigh while attempting to flee and was hospitalized, and a ransom of one million birr was demanded for each of the two abducted officials. In Bure Zuria (West Gojam Zone), an NEBE trainer traveling to Digo Tsiyon on March 17, 2026 to train election officials was seized by armed men at an

impromptu roadside search seven kilometers outside town; his whereabouts remained unknown ten days later, and no voter registration had taken place in the area as a result.

In Wondo Genet Woreda (Northern Sidama Zone), the chairperson of the Gogeti polling station (0851608040702) was severely beaten by members of the local community on April 5, 2026 and hospitalized; the assailants stated that because their demand to be administered within the Oromia region had gone unanswered, "no election is needed in our area." In Bena Tsemay Woreda (South Omo Zone), three armed men one of them a candidate in the 2005 election attempted on April 2, 2026 to abduct and kill the officials of the Temaliye polling station (0948705081101), forcing them to abandon the station for the entire morning; two of the three were later apprehended.

5.4.2. Threats and Intimidation Against Election Officials, Observers, and Participants

A pattern of threats and intimidation against those administering or participating in the election was reported across several zones. In Meket and Gazo Woredas (North Wollo Zone), armed group public statement of March 15, 2026 announcing that action would be taken against anyone participating in the administration of the election halted virtually all electoral activity: election officials were threatened, observers reported being unable to move freely and fearing for their safety, and neither campaigning nor voter registration was taking place weeks later. In Ambasel Woreda (South Wollo Zone), where the area was under armed group control, election officials faced threats and intimidation and the armed group posted the officials' name lists on social media.

Female officials were particular targets. In Mekane Selam Town (South Wollo Zone), threats delivered by SMS to officials' personal phones were directed at female election officials, who withdrew from duty and were replaced by men; some officials stopped work altogether or were compelled to change their places of residence. In Bahir Dar Zuria (Meray Town, West Gojam Zone), one of the three election officials received a written armed group message on March 28, 2026 threatening "action" if he did not stop work; he stopped and temporarily relocated to Bahir Dar for his safety. In Debre Tabor Town (South Gondar Zone), unidentified callers repeatedly telephoned the constituency coordinator on March 23 and 24, 2026, threatening him against carrying out election work, although voter registration continued without interruption.

In Andabet Woreda (South Gondar Zone), the armed group assembled congregants at the Tikil Dingay Mekane Eyesus church and issued severe threats that no election should take place, warning that anyone going to vote or observe "has passed sentence on his own life." In Addis Zemen Town, government officials stated that kebele chairpersons could not move freely owing to a serious threat in the area, and election officials conducting the ongoing registration also faced security threats from an unidentified source. In Shambu Town (Horo Gudru Wollega Zone, Oromia Region), NEBE trainers assigned to train the community were telephoned by unidentified persons and threatened "we will see whether you deliver it" and two of the four

trainers consequently declined to give the training; checklist comments from the same town reported that the armed group active in the area opposes the holding of the election.

5.4.3. Interruption of Electoral Processes in Conflict-Affected Areas

In some woredas, movement by armed groups affected electoral activity. In Ankober Woreda, armed group movements in some kebeles and recurrent exchanges of fire limited the electoral process; consequently, voter registration had not begun as of April 20, 2026. In neighboring Antsokiya-and-Gemza Woreda, movement by armed groups and ongoing gunfire were followed by a situation where no political campaigning or electoral activity took place.

In Meket Woreda (North Wollo Zone), movement by armed groups in some kebeles and recurrent gunfire limited the electoral environment; election materials did not arrive until late March, and polling station establishment and staff recruitment were still ongoing in mid-April. In Gazo Woreda, statements and movement by armed groups were followed by a situation where no campaigning or registration activity took place. In Dera Woreda, movement by armed groups was followed by no electoral activity. In Ebnet Woreda, following earlier security fluctuations, registration began after better security conditions were established in late March; however, ongoing movement by armed groups in rural kebeles led to residents collecting voter cards only when visiting the town for market.

In Dega Damot Woreda, orders by armed groups prohibiting campaigning resulted in a situation where no political party was present or able to move between April 4 and April 21, 2026, leading to no electoral activity. In Bugna/Gugma Woreda, ongoing security concerns restricted campaign activities, resulting in political figures requiring military escorts to conduct outreach, while broader political operations remained suspended. In Enarj Enawga Woreda, no party other than the ruling party was operating in Debre Work town and kebele 03; concurrently, statements by armed groups threatening participants caused residents to fear registering, holding voter cards, or participating in the process.

5.4.4. Armed Clashes, Explosions, and Inter-communal Violence

In Jawi Woreda (Awi Zone), unidentified actors threw a bomb behind the Fendika 01 Le polling station (0318008112603) on the morning of April 1, 2026, injuring a policewoman serving at polling station and a male civilian at a nearby coffee house. In Gozamin Woreda (East Gojam Zone), an exchange of fire between armed group fighters and peacekeepers and the Defense Force took place near the Desla polling station on March 25, 2026, and because armed incursions recur, open polling stations required permanent guarding. In Bure Zuria (Digo Tsiyon), the polling station was surrounded by armed group fighters amid heavy gunfire on April 1, 2026, with no registrants present, and armed groups conducted spot searches in the area that made movement difficult for political parties. In Libo Kemkem Woreda (South Gondar Zone), election officials could reach the Adita polling station only escorted by a combined Defense Force and militia detail estimated at up to 300 personnel, while in Guna Bage Midir Woreda no fixed

polling station had been opened: officials, accompanied by security forces, carried the register and voter cards to church gates and road junctions to register passers-by, and, citing grave fears, declined to be observed.

In Bedele Town (Buno Bedele Zone, Oromia Region), unannounced police searches were conducted from the morning of April 8, 2026, with people removed from vehicles and searched; in Meko Woreda of the same zone, checklist comments recorded security threats, deployments of government forces, spot searches, and road closures from February through April.

In Derashe Woreda (Gardula Zone, South Ethiopia Region), a month-long inter-communal conflict in the lowland kebeles notably Haybena, Keyama, Kolto, Haka, and Shilale caused deaths and closures of main roads, severely affecting mobility and local stability; a female regional official had earlier been killed on the affected road, and the area began to stabilize only after Defense Force deployment from March 22, 2026. In Salamago Woreda (South Omo Zone), gunfire among pastoralist communities made movement between observation sites hazardous, and officials conducted mobile registration by carrying the register and cards to schools and market centers.

5.4.5. Misuse of State Resources and Campaigning in Prohibited Settings

Observation reports documented repeated misuse of government resources for ruling party campaigning. In Gozamin Woreda (East Gojam Zone), a police vehicle was used for Prosperity Party campaigning in the Wenka area on March 24, 2026, and in Nekemte City Administration (Burka Jato Woreda, Oromia Region), a government vehicle was observed being used for the same party's campaigning near the stadium on April 8, 2026. In the Harari Region (Sofi Woreda), the woreda administrator was seen on April 12, 2026 using the government vehicle assigned to him for official duties to campaign for the Prosperity Party and was taken into police custody. According to a report from our observer, the woreda administrator was subsequently taken into police custody.

In Salamago Woreda (South Omo Zone), ruling party members repeatedly used government vehicles for campaign purposes in the Mursi and Bodi constituencies on different days since observation began, and in South Sodo Woreda (East Gurage Zone, Central Ethiopia Region), government motorcycles were used for campaigning while kebele employees campaigned under cover of government work around the Degatrena, Gugeti 1–3, Golbe, and Agem Senado station areas.

Campaigns were conducted in places where it is legally prohibited: In Tach Armachiho Woreda (Central Gondar Zone), woreda officials who had addressed a congregation inside the Kidane Mihret church about local security on March 31, 2026 concluded by displaying the Prosperity Party's wheat-sheaf emblem and campaigning for the party. In Alem Ketema Town (North Shewa Zone), Prosperity Party campaigning was conducted during working hours within a 200-meter radius of a government office between April 15 and 20, 2026. In West Badewacho

Woreda (Hadiya Zone), ruling party campaigning at Gaysa Molokoza on April 23, 2026, was accompanied by roadblocks and intimidation directed at women and people with disabilities, until police were deployed and calmed the situation. Restrictions on party activity were also recorded: in Quarit Woreda (West Gojam Zone), armed group militia forces strictly confined the Prosperity Party the only political entity present to narrow operating boundaries, In Ginir Town (East Bale Zone), only one political party had campaigned since February, and in Yabelo Woreda (Borena Zone), no campaigning had been observed on the ground at all.

5.4.6. Dissemination of False Information and Incitement

In Debre Elias Woreda (East Gojam Zone, Amhara Region), an armed group was reported to be actively disseminating false information claiming that the election process would not be recognized or acceptable in the area, targeting the general public with the apparent aim of discouraging participation. More broadly, messaging by armed groups in several areas of North Wollo and East Gojam including the March 15, 2026 statement of the armed group that action would be taken against any participant in the election constituted incitement to violence and threats against NEBE officials, election workers, and voters, contributing to a climate of fear and disinformation.

5.4.7. Obstruction of Observers

CECOE's own observers faced obstruction in several locations. In Lay Gayint Woreda (South Gondar Zone), an observer on his way to afternoon observation on April 20, 2026 was stopped by three police officers, the local security head and his guard, and a municipal official; despite presenting his ID and observer badge, he was taken to the mayor's office where he was described over the phone as having been "taken into custody" and released only after the woreda and zone NEBE coordinators vouched for him. In the same woreda, the polling station opened only on April 9, 2026, with no registration before that date. In Guna Bage Midir Woreda (Kimir Dingay town), peacekeepers refused a CECOIE observer entry to the newly opened municipal station "Ha," claiming they could not establish that the observer's badge was not forged. In Jinela Woreda (Harari Region), the observer was denied entry to the Jegnoch Secondary School station (1355211010301) on March 23 and again on March 28, 2026 by the election officials, who stated that no one was permitted to enter and made the observer leave under intimidation. In Dangur Woreda (Metekel Zone), following the deadly inter-communal clash of April 4, 2026, the observer was unable to return to the Aypapa station.

5.4.8. Disruption of Voter Education

In Humbo Woreda (Wolaita Zone, South Ethiopia Region), voter education being provided by civic associations opposite the Humbo Telaba town market (station area 0944429070202) on April 2, 2026 was disrupted for about an hour and a half when a religious institution, using loudspeakers, carried its own teaching to the same place and time; security personnel intervened to end the disruption.

5.4.9. Communications Shutdowns and Related Restrictions

In Hidebu Abote Woreda (North Shewa Zone, Oromia Region), a complete telephone network shutdown was reported from 5:00 p.m. on March 24 until the evening of March 25, 2026, limiting access to information and communication. In Enarj Enawga Woreda (East Gojam Zone), no internet service of any kind was available at station 0308213031903 as of March 21, 2026. In Kedida Gamela Woreda (Kembata Tembaro Zone), intermittent connectivity interruptions affected tablet-based registration, although verification found no indication that the interruptions were deliberate. Verification also resolved one reported incident: in Kolfe Keranio Woreda 4 (Addis Ababa), a road closure reported during voter registration hours was confirmed to have been ordinary traffic congestion rather than a security-related closure.

5.4.10. Critical Concerns during the Voter Registration Process

The critical concerns listed below were identified solely at the registration stations where CECOE's observers were deployed. Detailed findings of these concerns are presented as follows:

5.4.10.1. Stations Established in Prohibited Places

In the Amhara region, in Guna Begemidir Woreda, South Gondar Zone, CECOE's observer noted that a registration station was not opened at a permanent site. Election officers, along with government security forces, were observed conducting registration using register books and voter cards outside the fence of Michael Church and in an area called Megendi Mewucha, registering citizens early in the morning as they returned from church.

In the Oromia region, in Shenen Limu Kebele, Limu Genet Woreda of the Jimma Zone, CECOE's observer on Megabit 16, 2018 E.C., witnessed a registration station established inside Limu Shenen Health Center. In Medja Dama Kebele, Negele Town Administration of the West Arsi Zone, on Megabit 23, 2018 E.C., CECOE's observer saw a registration station established inside a health post. In Kebele 04 of Debre Birhan Woreda in the North Shewa Zone, an observation on Megabit 30, 2018 E.C. revealed that a registration station was established inside a militia training center or military camp. In Kebele 01 of Legambo Woreda in the South Wollo Zone, on Megabit 18, 2018 E.C., CECOE's observer noted that a registration station was organized and operational inside the Akesta Health Center.

In the Benishangul-Gumuz region, in Kebele 01, in an area called Hidassie in Mandura Woreda of the Metekel Zone, on Ginbot 13, 2018 E.C., CECOE's observer noted that within the compound of a local sub-police station consisting of two rooms, regular police work was being conducted in one room, while voter registration was being held in the second. In Gilgel Beles of the same Woreda, on Megabit 13, 2018 E.C., CECOE's observer noted that a registration station was established inside a police station. In Pawi Village 49 Kebele, Pawi Woreda of the Metekel Zone, on Megabit 26, 2018 E.C., and in Abat Beles Kebele on Megabit 21, 2018 E.C., CECOE's observers noted that registration stations were set up and operational inside health posts.

In the Sidama region, in Yirgalem Town of Dale Woreda, Central Sidama Zone, at the Ananist registration station on Megabit 16, 2018 E.C., CECOE's observer noted that the registration station was established in the main room of a private residence. In Butule of Haruma Kebele in Wondo Genet Woreda, North Sidama Zone, on Megabit 19, 2018 E.C., CECOE's observer noted that the station was set up on the porch of a private home, where the home owner lived, and election materials were stored in that same private house after working hours. In Chat Tera of Kebele 01 in Aleta Chuko Woreda, South Sidama Zone, on Megabit 21, 2018 E.C., the observer saw that the registration station was initially set up next to a mosque, then merged with the Wofcho Sefer Dama registration station, and a week later, moved to another location. In Alata Awora Godana Camp, Mesalemia Kebele of Aleta Wondo Woreda, on Megabit 18, 2018 E.C., the observer found that the registration station was established in one of the rooms of an occupied private house. In Gidbo Office, Aleta Wondo Woreda of the same zone, on Megabit 21, 2018 E.C., the observer noted that the registration station was established at the Prosperity Party office location. In Bera Kedicho Elelcho Aluja Village, on Megabit 14, 2018 E.C., the registration station was set up inside the compound of a private residence, and election materials were stored in this individual's house at the end of each day's work.

In the South Ethiopia region, CECOE's observers noted that registration stations were established inside Jinka Millennium Health Center on Megabit 26, 2018 E.C., as well as inside health centers and health posts located in Hop Sefer and Dorze Holoo in Chenchu Zuria Woreda, Gamo Zone. In Dalume Kebele of Derashe Town Administration, as well as at the Bode registration station in Gerese Town Administration, on Megabit 28, 2018 E.C., observers noted that registration stations were established inside a health center and a room within the compound of the Mekane Yesus religious institution. In Dolzia and Fadele in Kamba Woreda, Gamo Zone, observers witnessed registration stations established inside a health post and a health center.

In the Gardula and Burji zones, in Upper Argoba Kete Health Center and Upper Argoba Health Post under Gidole Town Administration, Gardula Zone, on Megabit 18, 2018 E.C., CECOE's observer noted that registration stations were set up within the compounds of these health institutions. In Soyama Town Administration, Burji Zone, at the Grazmach Damte Memorial Primary School on Megabit 01, 2018 E.C., the registration station was initially set up in the school but was later moved to a rented private house. In Tafa under Laha Town Administration, Gofa Zone, on Megabit 19, 2018 E.C., a registration station was observed set up inside a police station.

In Addis Ababa, a registration station was operating inside the Lafto Health Center in Nifas Silk Lafto Woreda 12 on Miyazia 24, 2018 E.C., and the Addis Hiwot station (1452606090107) was operating inside the Addis Hiwot Health Center compound in Gullele Woreda 06 on Ginbot 8, 2018 E.C. In Ofa Woreda of the Wolaita Zone, South Ethiopia Region, the Dekaya Balshiya station (09947315071001) was found on Megabit 20, 2018 E.C. to have been established inside the kebele administration office. In Debre Tabor Town, South Gondar Zone, the kebele 02 station near the Blood Bank (0310718140215) was sited on the edge of the town beside a forested area

assessed as a security risk, and on Miyazia 6, 2018 E.C. security forces, in agreement with the officers, closed it two hours before the regular closing time.

5.4.10.2. Election Officers below the legally mandated number

In Addis Ababa, in Gullele Woreda 06, in an area locally called Hibret Minch, on Miyazia 5, 2018 E.C., CECOE's observer noted that there was only one male election officer present, who was working as a registrar. In Kolfe Keranio Sub-City Woreda 4, on Megabit 19, 2018 E.C., only two officers (a male chairperson and a female queue controller/searcher) were present, and in the same woreda on Megabit 28, 2018 E.C., only two female officers were on duty, with the main chairperson absent. In Woreda 15, Garment Addis Ababa Condominium Shalom registration station, on Megabit 6, 2018 E.C., only two officers (a female and a male queue controller) were present.

In the Oromia region, in Gucha Kebele, Negele Borena Town Administration of the East Borena Zone, in front of the General Hospital, on the morning of Megabit 12, 2017 E.C., only a single male officer was seen conducting registration. In a specific area called Disico, a single male officer was similarly conducting the work alone. In an area called Keera in Melka Oda Kebele, only one male officer was present in the afternoon. The officers at these three stations explained to the observer that their colleagues did not show up because it was farming season, and they decided to work in shifts while the others went to tend to their farms. In Genet Abo of Haru Woreda, West Welega Zone, on Megabit 16, 2018 E.C., only two officers (one female and one male) were present. In Bedele Woreda of the Buno Bedele Zone, we observed only one female election officer conducting registration. In Geda Abalo station in Bonya Boshe Woreda, East Welega Zone, only two male officers were present and working. In Teko Berberisa station in Alge Sachi Woreda, Illu Ababora Zone, only two male officers were present.

In the Amhara region, in Kombolcha Town, Argoba Special Zone, on Megabit 17, 2018 E.C., only two male officers were on duty. On Megabit 20, 2018 E.C., at the "04 Ediroch Tsimret" (04 Edirs Union) station in the same town, only two female officers were on duty. In Banja Woreda, Injibara Town Administration of the Awi Zone, on Ginbot 16, 2018 E.C., we observed a single male officer conducting the process alone, while at another station, the work was carried out by only two officers. In Debre Werk Town, Enarj Enawga Woreda of the East Gojjam Zone, on Megabit 26, 2018 E.C., there were only two officers (a female chairperson and a male registrar). In Lemi, Ensaro Woreda of the North Shewa Zone, on Megabit 17, 2018 E.C., only a male chairperson and a female registrar were on duty. In Chereti Debeso, Artuma Fursi Woreda of the Oromo Nation Zone, on Megabit 23, 2018 E.C., only two officers (the chairperson and registrar) were present. In several stations across Artuma Fursi Woreda, registration was observed being conducted by only two male officers (chairperson and registrar) on Megabit 23 and Megabit 26, 2018 E.C. At Akesta Primary School in Legambo Woreda, on Megabit 24, 2018 E.C., a male chairperson was found working entirely alone. In Hagere Maryam and Kesem Woreda of the North Shewa Zone, on Megabit 11, 2018 E.C., only two officers were on duty; since the registrar

had been hospitalized, the chairperson was seen conducting the registration. On Megabit 18, 2018 E.C., in the same woreda, the observer saw only one male officer conducting registration. Furthermore, on Megabit 18, 2018 E.C. in the same woreda, nine elderly persons who should have been given priority were instead made to wait in the queue. In Injibara Town Administration, at the site called Registration Station 2, on Miyazia 27, 2018 E.C., only two officers were working.

In the Benishangul-Gumuz region, in Mandura Woreda, Metekel Zone, on Megabit 29, 2018 E.C., a single male registrar was seen conducting registration alone. In a station located near Village 6 Warehouse, Village 30 Kebele of Pawi Woreda, on Megabit 17, 2018 E.C., only two male officers (one chairperson and one queue controller) were present.

In the Central Ethiopia region, in Shashego Woreda, Hadiya Zone, on Megabit 23, 2018 E.C., CECOE's observer confirmed that a single registration station chairperson was working alone at various stations. In a specific place called Tembaro Hera in Damboya Woreda, Kembata Tembaro Zone, only two male officers (chairperson and registrar) were present on both Megabit 21 and Megabit 03, 2018 E.C. In Doyo Gena Woreda on Ginbot 15, 2018 E.C., and in Leni Suticho Upper Zalako on Megabit 28, 2018 E.C., only two officers were on duty. In Mino Medeb School, Kacha Bira Woreda, on Megabit 26, 2018 E.C., we observed a single female registrar working alone.

In the Gambella region, in Gambella Town, Anywaak Zone, at a specific area called Jejebe, on Megabit 7, 2018 E.C., we observed a single male registrar conducting registration alone. At Wibur School on Megabit 22, 2018 E.C., only two officers were present, and at various other stations such as Sport Commission, Tesfa Dirijit Sefer (Hope Organization Neighborhood), Medhanealem Sefer, and Wollo Sefer Chane House, only one or two officers were on duty. At the Jejebe station on Miyazia 7, 2018 E.C., only one officer was found on duty, and at Terkedi Sefer on Megabit 26, 2018 E.C., only one officer was observed conducting the work.

In the Sidama region, in the Terufat area, Hawassa City Administration, on Megabit 24, 2018 E.C., only two officers (one female and one male) were present, while in the Guwi area, only two male officers were present on Yekatit 19, 2018 E.C., and only one male officer was present on Megabit 24, 2018 E.C. In Tula Woreda, only two male officers (chairperson and registrar) were on duty. At Mesalemia Youth Center, Aleta Wondo Woreda, on Miyazia 13, 2018 E.C., only two officers (a female chairperson and a male registrar) were observed working. In the same woreda, at an area locally known as Tamrat Belete House, on Miyazia 11, 2018 E.C., a single female officer was observed conducting the work alone. In Gidbo Kulka Sine Tulo, on Megabit 24, 2018 E.C., only a single male chairperson was present, and at the Gidbo Office, on Megabit 21, 2018 E.C., only two female officers were on duty. In Gidbo Albono Village, on Megabit 24 and Megabit 22, 2018 E.C., only two male officers were conducting registration.

In the South Ethiopia region, in Jinka Town Administration, Ari Zone, registration was observed being conducted by only two officers on Megabit 19, 21, 23, and 26, 2018 E.C., as well as on Miyazia 6 and 9, 2018 E.C., across various stations. The gender composition of these duos was either one male and one female, or both males. In Birbir Town Administration, Gamo Zone, on Miyazia 13, 2018 E.C., only two male officers were on duty, and the chairperson was absent. At Algaye registration station in Derashe Woreda, Gardula Zone, on Megabit 24, 2018 E.C., only two officers were present out of the four that should have been assigned. In Karat Town Administration, Konso Zone, on Ginbot 14, 2018 E.C. and Miyazia 18, 2018 E.C., only two officers (one male and one female) were working. In Kele Town Administration, Kore Zone, across various stations on Megabit 07, Miyazia 08, and Megabit 26, 2018 E.C., only one or two officers were observed conducting registration. In Dilla Town Administration, Gedeo Zone, at Michile Sitosa and Tumkesa Udese on Megabit 18 and 19, 2018 E.C., either a single male chairperson worked alone or only two male officers were on duty. In Omo Hana Town, Selamago Woreda of the South Omo Zone, on Megabit 17, 2018 E.C., only two officers were present. At Bade Mewucha in Boloso Bombe Woreda, Wolaita Zone, on Megabit 17, 2018 E.C., only two officers were working in the absence of the chairperson. In Kindodidaye Woreda, at Sime Dolaye and Mandina Bola on Megabit 24 and Megabit 22, 2018 E.C., only one or two officers were seen on site. In Laha Town Administration, Gofa Zone, on Megabit 22, 2018 E.C., either a single male chairperson or only two male officers were observed working. In Soyama Town Administration, Burji Zone, we observed only one or two officers conducting registration across various stations, with the genders being male and female.

5.4.10.3. Punctuality and Adherence to Schedule by Election Officers

In Addis Ababa, in Gullele Woreda 06, at the Hibret Minch Edir House registration station on Miyazia 5, 2018 E.C., CECOE's observer saw that the election officers returned far past their scheduled time, arriving at 9:45 local time afternoon (3:45 PM standard time). In Kolfe Keranio Sub-City Woreda 4, on Megabit 24, 2018 E.C., the observer noted that two election officers took a lunch break of over an hour, and only the chairperson arrived on time. On Miyazia 6, 2018 E.C., in Woreda 15, Garment Oromia Condominium Parking 2 registration station, the observer noted that the station was opened by only one election officer at 7:30 local time afternoon (1:30 PM standard time), while the other officers, citing that they were fasting, did not arrive until 9:00 local time (3:00 PM standard time).

In the Central Ethiopia region, in Muhor Aklil Woreda, Ezha Constituency of the Gurage Zone, at Fana registration station on Megabit 26, 2018 E.C., CECOE's afternoon observer confirmed that the station remained closed until 8:30 local time afternoon (2:30 PM standard time). At Shano Hule Ber registration station in Shashego Woreda, Hadiya Zone, on Megabit 28, 2018 E.C., the observer noted at 7:30 local time afternoon (1:30 PM standard time) that the officers had exceeded their designated lunch hour and only returned at 9:00 local time (3:00 PM standard time). At Lemi Suticha Zeleko registration station in Angecha Kebele, Doyo Gena Woreda, Kembata Tembaro Zone, on Megabit 28, 2018 E.C., the observer noted that officers spent more

than an hour at lunch. Though the observer was on site from 8:00 local time (2:00 PM standard time), the station remained closed until 10:00 local time (4:00 PM standard time), and the observer learned from three citizens waiting to register that the officers had gone for lunch. At Mino Medeb School in Mino Kebele, Kacha Bira Woreda, on Megabit 27, 2018 E.C., the observer noted that the officers' lunch break exceeded one hour, and a similar issue was observed at Tsudamo Kiray Bet (Tsudamo Rented House) registration station on Megabit 28, 2018 E.C.

In the Sidama region, in Keera area of Aleta Wondo Woreda, South Sidama Zone, on Megabit 29, 2018 E.C., the observer noted that the officers' lunch break lasted over an hour, as they left at 6:30 local time (12:30 PM standard time) and returned at 8:30 local time (2:30 PM standard time). In the same woreda, at a registration station behind Tele in Chefe Kebele, on Megabit 28, 2018 E.C., the observer confirmed that officers went for lunch at 6:30 local time (12:30 PM standard time) and returned around 9:30 local time (3:30 PM standard time).

further findings on late opening, extended breaks, and unscheduled closure. In West Azernet Berber Woreda of the Silte Zone, Central Ethiopia Region, the Aysako (0740106200202) and Chenchen (0740106050601) stations did not open at all on the morning of Miyazia 30, 2018 E.C., which the officers attributed to transport difficulties and to NEBE's failure to pay them. In Tembaro Woreda of the Kembata Tembaro Zone, station 07486031100903 was found closed at about 9:00 local time in the afternoon (3:00 PM standard time) on Megabit 23, 2018 E.C., and three citizens who had come to register were turned away. In Tula Woreda of Hawassa City Administration, Sidama Region, station 85120601111 had still not opened by 9:30 local time in the afternoon (3:30 PM standard time), which prevented both registration and observation. In Blate Zuria Woreda of the Northern Sidama Zone, the four officers' lunch break on Megabit 25, 2018 E.C. exceeded one hour, the station standing unattended between 6:30 and 7:45 local time (12:30 and 1:45 PM standard time). In Aleta Wondo Woreda of the South Sidama Zone, the Gidbo Office station (0849904002204) was found closed on the afternoons of Megabit 13 and Miyazia 25, 2018 E.C., and the Gidbowe station (084990305203) was found closed on Megabit 13, 2018 E.C.

In Pawi Woreda of the Metekel Zone, Benishangul-Gumuz Region, the Mender 4 Health Station registration station (639207002302) in the Felege Selam area closed from 6:30 local time (12:30 PM standard time) on Tir 15, 2018 E.C. for repairs and did not reopen for the remainder of the day. In Ensaro Woreda of the North Shewa Zone, the Lemi 01 station (03097270201) closed at 10:30 local time (4:30 PM standard time) on Megabit 17, 2018 E.C., before the prescribed closing time. In Legambo Woreda of the South Wollo Zone, the Bele station in kebele 02 (0313403070202) remained closed into the afternoon session and opened only at 9:00 local time (3:00 PM standard time). In Debre Tabor Town, station 0310718140102 in kebele 07 closed at 10:00 local time (4:00 PM standard time) on Megabit 16, 2018 E.C., an hour and a half before the prescribed time. In Semera City Administration, Semera Logia Zone, Afar Region, the Minaharya Ber station remained closed from Megabit 16, 2018 E.C. onward on the ground that it

had reached its quota of 1,500 registrants, a ground for which the directive makes no provision during an open registration period.

In Goba Woreda of the Kaffa Zone, Southwest Ethiopia Region, officers at the Gobera Temaber station in Dish Town (1141610004802) took a lunch break exceeding one hour on Megabit 18, 2018 E.C., which they attributed to rain. In Kele Town Administration of the Kore Zone, South Ethiopia Region, the Tsolboko Tuesday Market station (09392800102) was opened at about 8:26 local time in the afternoon (2:26 PM standard time) on Megabit 8, 2018 E.C. by a member of the militia rather than by an election officer, and officers at the same station later returned late from lunch, delaying and inconveniencing registrants. In Kindo Didaye Woreda of the Wolaita Zone, officers at the Kindo Koysha 2 Gocho 01 station (0945117071701) took more than one hour for lunch on Megabit 20, 2018 E.C., returning at about 8:40 local time (2:40 PM standard time). In Salamago Woreda of the South Omo Zone, officers at the Shumeto Development Association station took a lunch break exceeding one hour. In Gambella Town, Anywaak Zone, officers at the Mekane-Eyesus station (1251801060305) remained on lunch break for more than one hour on Megabit 20, 2018 E.C.

5.4.10.4. Denying Observers Entry to Registration Stations

In the Oromia region, in Buno Bedele Zone, on Megabit 15, 2018 E.C., CECOE's observer was initially denied entry to the registration station. However, they reported that the issue was resolved after some time.

In the Gambella region, in Anywaak Zone, on Megabit 25, 2018 E.C., CECOE's observer was barred from entering the registration station despite holding an official observer ID card.

In the Harari region, on Megabit 14, 2018 E.C., CECOE's observer went to observe at 3:00 local time in the morning (9:00 AM standard time), but the election officers refused to cooperate and intimidated the observer, forcing them to return without conducting their work.

In the Southwest Ethiopia region, in Kaffa Zone, on Megabit 15, 2018 E.C., CECOE's observer attempted to observe but was told they could not do so because they were not carrying a support/clearance letter.

In the Amhara region, in the South Gondar Zone, on Megabit 10, 2018 E.C., before the registration station opened, officers were observed traveling through neighborhoods, mosques, and churches to register people. When CECOE's observer went to the station to monitor, peacekeepers barred them, claiming their badge might be forged or they might have an alternative agenda. The election officers gave a similar response and directed the observer to go to another station. When the observer arrived at the designated location, they were accused of having a forged badge and an alternative mission, loaded into a police vehicle, and escorted to the municipality building by five security personnel. Although released with the assistance of an acquaintance working at the municipality, shortly after leaving, they were called back and

instructed to go to the Board's constituency coordination office. The zonal coordinator made similar accusations, but after calling CECOE's main office to verify, they released the observer at 11:00 local time in the afternoon (5:00 PM standard time). However, the coordinator stated they would not write any support letters for the stations until verification came directly from the Election Board.

In another woreda of the same South Gondar Zone, on Miyazia 12, 2018 E.C., when CECOE's observer went to monitor in the afternoon, three police officers, the local security chief, and a municipality official came to their house and demanded their ID and badge. Under the pretext of "investigation," they took the observer to the mayor's office, and were overheard on the phone saying, "We have arrested them." The zonal and woreda election board coordinators responded by saying they did not know the observer. The woreda election coordinator gave an illegal explanation, stating: "You are only supposed to observe on election day, not now during the registration period." After various phone calls and clarifications, they were released around 11:00 local time in the afternoon (5:00 PM standard time).

In the Basketo Special Zone, in Laska Zuria Woreda, the Ganchire 01 station had still not opened by 5:00 local time in the morning (11:00 AM standard time) on Miyazia 25, 2018 E.C., when a station guard, relaying a message from the chairperson that the station would not open that day, required CECOE's observer to leave the area. A woman who had come to register told the observer that she had already missed the officers on a previous occasion and would not return again.

5.4.10.5. Registration without Verifying Identity and Residency

In the Amhara region, in Girbi Kebele, Farta Woreda of the South Gondar Zone, an observation on Ginbot 9, 2018 E.C. revealed that 13 people who lacked any form of identity card or credential were allowed to register. In contrast, at another registration station in the same woreda and kebele, eligible voters without ID cards were denied registration despite having valid witnesses. In Sayint Ajibar, South Wollo Zone, on Megabit 12, 2018 E.C., mothers who had come to vaccinate their children near the registration station estimated between 1 and 10 individuals were registered without showing any form of ID. Additionally, on Megabit 17, 2018 E.C., many people were registered without being asked for any identification; CECOE's observer confirmed that even when some were asked, they were registered despite having no ID. At a registration site designated as "B" in Zigem Woreda, Awi Zone, on Megabit 12, 2018 E.C., around 7:30 local time afternoon (1:30 PM standard time), farmers moving through the area came to obtain voter cards. The observer noted that the election officers on duty gave them voter cards solely based on personal acquaintance, without demanding IDs or witnesses. In Wegde Woreda of the South Wollo Zone, on Megabit 21, 2018 E.C., officers were stopping drivers and assistants, asking, "Have you taken your voter cards?" and registering them even though they carried no identification credentials. At a registration station in Kebele 01 of Injibara Town Administration, Awi Zone, and at Gembaha registration station in Sanja Woreda, on Megabit 27

and Megabit 16, 2018 E.C., respectively, two individuals who requested to obtain cards using witnesses were denied by the election officers.

In the Central Ethiopia region, in Saja Town Administration, Gurage Zone, on Miyazia 16, 2018 E.C., as well as in mid-Megabit, CECOE's observer witnessed two people who lacked Kebele IDs and had moved from another area for work being registered solely based on their verbal claim of, "We have lived here for over 6 months."

In the South Gondar Zone of the Amhara region, in Sedie Muja Woreda, from the resumption of registration on Miyazia 9, 2018 E.C., every person presenting themselves was registered without being asked for any form of identification, and officers additionally moved through the streets and from house to house registering whomever they found. This practice is recorded again in Section 5.4.10.10, since the manner in which it was conducted also bears on the voluntariness of the registrations obtained.

5.4.10.6. Interruptions in the Digital Registration System

In the Benishangul-Gumuz region, in Asosa Town Woreda 1, in an area called Asosa Hoha, on Megabit 16, 2018 E.C., around 3:40 local time in the morning (9:40 AM standard time), the digital voter registration system completely stopped working. Since the registrar's repeated efforts to restart the system failed, CECOE's observer noted that they resorted to manual registration in the paper registry book to prevent the registration process from being disrupted.

In the Central Ethiopia region, in Ginbichu Administration, Soro Woreda of the Hadiya Zone, an observation on Megabit 09, 2018 E.C. revealed that the system was not accepting manual data entry.

In the Sidama region, in Chefe Kota Jabela Kebele of Tula Woreda, Hawassa City Administration, CECOE's observer confirmed that approximately 10 people were turned away without registering due to system interruptions. Similarly, in the same woreda, after cards were issued to registrants during digital registration and they left the station, the officers could not locate their names in the system. Although they called an IT expert and followed correction steps, the names of registered persons disappeared completely from the system, resulting in a discrepancy of 35 people between the system's list and the number of issued cards. In Washa Kebele, near the school in Wondo Genet Woreda, North Sidama Zone, on Megabit 10, 2018 E.C., the system-based registration was interrupted because it failed to load photos and names, as noted by the observer. After the issue was reported, the process was converted to manual registration.

In the South Ethiopia region, in Guno Hamus Kebele, Damo Sore Woreda of the Wolaita Zone, during a morning observation on Megabit 21, 2018 E.C., the voter registration, which was being conducted via tablet, was entirely shifted to manual registration due to system errors, as noted by CECOE's observer.

Materials and data-integrity problems were recorded alongside the system interruptions. In Injibara Town kebele 01 of the Awi Zone, on Megabit 16, 2018 E.C., the station had no stamp-pad ink for registrants unable to sign their names, and one registrant was turned away without being registered. In Kamba Woreda of the Gamo Zone, three separate registration stations, namely Dolzia, Boksho, and Fudele, were found to be operating under the same station identification code (0944401100101), a duplication that would prevent the accurate attribution of registration data to the correct station.

5.4.10.7. Non-issuance and Collection/Withholding of Voter Cards

In the Oromia region, in Ejersa Kite school registration station, Arsi Zone, an observation on Miyazia 24, 2018 E.C., revealed that registrants were leaving their voter cards at the station after registering. During the observation, about 15 people were seen handing over their voter cards to the officers before departing. The reason given was the presence of armed groups in the area, and citizens feared that these armed groups would take action against them if found carrying voter cards. At a registration station in Dari Oda under Aseko Woreda of the same zone, on Miyazia 30, 2018 E.C., the observer saw that voter cards were not being issued to registrants. This was reportedly due to the security impact on citizens following movements of unidentified armed actors in the area. Similarly, at Forenso registration station in Bure Woreda, Illu Ababora Zone, the observer noted that more than 10 registrants were not issued voter cards immediately. The reason provided was that voter cards had run out, and local residents were told to return to pick them up once new cards arrived.

5.4.10.8. Presence of Unauthorized Persons at Stations

In the Oromia region, near Bate School in Haramaya Town Woreda, East Hararghe Zone, on Yekatit 29, 2018 E.C., the Kebele chairman and other leaders were observed inside the registration station in the afternoon, discussing relocating the station. The observer noted that they intended to relocate it because very few people had come to register at the current site. At the station in front of Bate School in the same area, on Megabit 19, 2018 E.C., the Kebele chairman and other leaders were seen inside the station inspecting the registration status. In Buyem and Lefegaba registration stations in Mole Bilu Kebele, Mencho Woreda of the Jimma Zone, on Megabit 12 and 14, 2018 E.C., a Prosperity Party coordinator was present inside the stations monitoring the process, and even asked CECOE's observer, "What are you doing here?"

In the Amhara region, at Shesha Ber No. 8 registration station in Kombolcha Town, on Megabit 15, 2018 E.C., non-election officers going door-to-door under the guise of "mobilization" went beyond raising awareness. The observer confirmed that they returned to the station to perform supervisory activities, asking, "How many people came? I just sent people to register." In Kebele 02 of Aykel Town, Chilga Woreda in the Central Gondar Zone, on Megabit 23, 2018 E.C., since the station was established next to a traditional Tella (local beer) house, two individuals brought their drinks from the establishment, drinking inside the registration station while talking with the

officers. In Lemi Kebele 01, Ensaro Woreda, on Megabit 17, 2018 E.C., heads of the Women's Affairs and Trade offices were present inside the station, registering people who took cards using a separate form unapproved by the Election Board, as confirmed by the observer.

Security forces and militia were themselves among the intruders. In Tach Armachiho Woreda, Central Gondar Zone of the Amhara Region, on Megabit 21, 2018 E.C., security forces (militia and riot police) entered the registration station without being invited by the station head. In another station in the same woreda on that day, around 3:30 local time in the morning (9:30 AM standard time), armed personnel (militia and riot police) entered the station, greeted a person inside, and stood talking to them for a long time. In Debre Werk Town, Enarj Enawga Woreda of the East Gojjam Zone, on Megabit 26, 2018 E.C., the observer saw unauthorized armed militia members walking in and out of the registration station. In Delalela Hobe Village of Aleta Wondo Woreda, South Sidama Zone, on Megabit 21, 2018 E.C., a militia member entered and sat inside the station without being called by the station head.

Party mobilizers completed the picture. In Beshano Hule Ber registration station, Shashego Woreda of the Hadiya Zone in Central Ethiopia, on Miyazia 16, 2018 E.C., CECOE's observer saw ruling party (Prosperity Party) leaders gathering election data, asking, "Who registered? Who hasn't registered?" In Urulcho registration station, Giyote Gerba Kebele of Damboya Woreda, Kembata Tembaro Zone, on Megabit 16, 2018 E.C., Prosperity Party leaders entered the station without any party agent identification badges and engaged in coordinating activities, telling people, "Go in and register." At Dekaya Balshia registration station in Ofa Woreda, Wolaita Zone of the South Ethiopia Region, on Megabit 20, 2018 E.C., Prosperity Party leaders entered without any permission and collected information on how many voters had taken cards. In Woreda 06 of Dire Dawa, on Megabit 26, 2018 E.C., a female Prosperity Party mobilizer entered the station without legal representation, stating, "I have brought registrants for you," but when the officer gestured with his eyes to indicate the presence of observers, she cut her speech short and left.

In one case, an unaccredited individual acted as an officer outright. At registration station number 851206011111 in Tula Woreda, Hawassa City Administration of the Sidama Region, CECOE's observer confirmed that an individual who lacked NEBE accreditation was receiving IDs and coordinating activities as though he were an election officer. When the observer asked about this individual, the election officers claimed they did not know him, while he responded, "I was assigned by the Kebele to coordinate the election." Throughout his stay at the station, this individual was observed receiving voters' IDs and directing them as if he were an election officer.

further instances. In Sedie Muja Woreda of the South Gondar Zone, security forces comprising militia, Defense Force, and police entered the Mindil Amba kebele station in Miyazia 2018 E.C. without being invited by the station head, citing security concerns. In Addis Ababa, at the Garment Oromia Condominium Parking 2 station (1453107050101), an unauthorized person

entered the station without any stated reason at about 7:30 local time in the afternoon (1:30 PM standard time) on Miyazia 6, 2018 E.C.

5.4.10.9. Non-In-Person/Proxy Registration

The electoral law requires every registrant to appear in person at the registration station and prohibits registration by proxy or by a representative. This section records the instances in which a person other than the registrant completed the registration, whether or not the absent person had consented. Registration procured by pressure, threat, or instruction is a distinct violation and is treated separately in Section 5.4.10.10 below. Across the stations it observed, CECOE recorded registration in the absence of the registrant at 92 manual stations, or 2 %, and at 12 tablet stations, or 3 %. The incidents below are those in which CECOE's observers were able to record the circumstances directly.

In the Oromia region, at a registration station near Burqa Jato Kebele 03 (Cheleleqi) Meskel Square in Nekemte Town Administration, on Miyazia 12, 2018 E.C., CECOE's observer saw a father registering on behalf of his child. In Arsi Negele Town, on Megabit 24, 2018 E.C., a husband came and registered his wife, taking her voter card. In Kebele 02 of Ambo Town, at a place called Bekele Gebeya, on Megabit 12, 2018 E.C., proxy registration was observed where a single individual came and registered multiple people. In Aseko 01 registration station located at Abdi School in Aseko Woreda, Arsi Zone, as well as in other stations, the observer confirmed husbands registering on behalf of their wives by proxy.

In the Amhara region, at the Kaleb “B” registration station in Kombolcha Town, on Megabit 15, 2018 E.C., in the afternoon, a mother stating that her husband was critically ill presented her husband's Fayda ID and mobile phone in order to register him by proxy. In the same town, at the site called Mastawqiya registration station, on Megabit 21, 2018 E.C., an individual presented another person's Fayda ID and mobile phone in order to register them. Although the registration could not be completed because the OTP did not arrive on the phone, the officers sent him away with the instruction to telephone them and read out the OTP once it arrived. In Zone Two, Kebele 02 of Aykel Town in Chilga Woreda, Central Gondar Zone, on Megabit 23, 2018 E.C., a woman presented her husband's ID and registered him, and the officers issued his card to her. In Mekdela Woreda of the South Wollo Zone, on Megabit 24, 2018 E.C., an individual was observed registering and taking voter cards for more than five people who were absent. In Legambo Woreda of the same zone, at the Bele station in kebele 02 (0313403070202), on the morning of Miyazia 2, 2018 E.C., a single individual was observed having several absent persons registered and collecting their voter cards.

In the Central Ethiopia and Southwest Ethiopia regions, at Leino registration station in Leino Kebele, Doyo Gena Woreda of the Kembata Tembaro Zone, on Megabit 15, 2018 E.C., a registrant registered himself and then registered and took a card for his absent wife. In front of the Kebele 03 station in Gambella Town, Anywaak Zone, on Megabit 25, 2018 E.C., an

individual was seen registering by proxy on behalf of his spouse. In Dacha Bas Zone 03 of Yidget Kebele, Bench Sheko Zone of the Southwest Ethiopia Region, on Megabit 16, 2018 E.C., the observer noted an individual registering on behalf of his wife.

In the Sidama region, in Gidbo Were Village of Aleta Wondo Woreda, South Sidama Zone, on Megabit 25, 2018 E.C., a husband was seen registering his wife. Similarly, in Gidbo Were Madeya (Gas Station) Village on Megabit 24, 2018 E.C., an individual was seen registering for his wife. At another station on Megabit 14, 2018 E.C., an individual registered his daughter by proxy while she was living in another country. At Shele Lancho 03 registration station on Megabit 24, 2018 E.C., a man registered by proxy for his wife. In Gidbo Were Village on Megabit 15, 2018 E.C., an election officer was observed registering an individual in their absence using their ID card.

In the South Ethiopia and Gambella regions, in Ledobeshiro of Kamba Woreda, Gamo Zone, on Miyazia 8, 2018 E.C., a Prosperity Party observer was seen pressuring election officers to register individuals who came to register by proxy on behalf of others. CECOE's observer confirmed that the registrars complied and registered those proxy cases. At the Kebele 03 registration station in Jejebe, Gambella Region, on Megabit 25, 2018 E.C., an individual was observed registering by proxy for his wife.

5.4.10.10. Coerced Registration

In the Amhara region, at the Chereqa registration station in Jawi Woreda of the Awi Zone, on Megabit 12, 2018 E.C., CECOE's observer confirmed that election officers spent the day asking voters for the names of their family members and compelling them to take cards for those family members, even in the absence of identity documents. In one instance recorded by the observer, a husband was made to take a card for his wife.

In Antsokiya and Gemza Woreda of the North Shewa Zone, from Miyazia 8, 2018 E.C., election officers conducted house-to-house registration in Afso Kebele, accompanied in the Webesha area by a representative of the ruling party, and told residents that every person over the age of 18 was obliged to take a card irrespective of whether they wished to do so.

In the woreda seat of Mekoy, residents were summoned to meetings guarded by security forces and were made to take voter cards at those meetings.

In Sedie Muja Woreda of the South Gondar Zone, from the resumption of registration on Miyazia 9, 2018 E.C., officers moved through the streets and from house to house registering whomever they encountered, without request and without asking for identification.

Two further patterns recorded elsewhere in this chapter bear directly on the freedom of registration and should be read together with the incidents above. The first is the practice, documented in Section 5.4.10.5, of officers approaching citizens in the course of their daily

activities and pressing voter cards upon them: in Wegde Woreda of the South Wollo Zone, on Megabit 21, 2018 E.C., officers stopped drivers and their assistants to ask whether they had taken their voter cards and registered them on the spot without any identification, and in Sayint Ajibar in the same zone mothers who had come to have their children vaccinated were registered as they passed.

These practices did not go unremarked by the Board. During the registration period NEBE issued a public statement on the breaches of law it had observed in the course of voter registration, in which it recorded that it had received reports of officials moving from house to house telling citizens to take voter cards, of registration being improperly linked to the receipt of social services, and of pressure being brought to bear on citizens by connecting registration to their employment. The Board restated the law: voter education may be delivered only by the Board itself or by the civil society organizations and educational institutions it has accredited for the purpose, and campaigning may be conducted only by the political parties registered to contest the election. On that basis it notified the regional governments and the city administrations, and their executives at every level of the hierarchy, to refrain from house-to-house canvassing and from exerting any undue influence that presents registration as an obligation.¹⁴³

The statement addressed the specific practices this section documents. No body may lawfully go from house to house instructing citizens to register, compel employees to register, or threaten that salaries will be withheld from those who do not take a voter card; the Board described such threats as unlawful acts which it strongly opposed, undertook to expose publicly the bodies and institutions responsible, and warned that if corrective measures were not taken it would go so far as to identify the constituencies and polling stations in which improper canvassing had occurred and take measures to prevent the election being conducted in them. It affirmed that citizens should come forward to register voluntarily and by their own decision, in the knowledge that registering as a voter is not an obligation and that a failure to register would not cause any salary to be withheld, any person to lose employment, or any social service to be denied. It closed by calling on citizens to report those who infringe that right, so that it could act on the reports.

5.4.10.11. Not Reading Out Assisted Registrants' Information

In the Amhara region, in Addis Alem 04 Second Station, Addis Zemen Woreda of the South Gondar Zone, a morning observation on Miyazia 26, 2018 E.C. revealed that reading out voter information loudly was forbidden due to security concerns in the area. This restriction made it difficult to communicate details to registrants and had an adverse impact on the transparency of the registration process.

¹⁴³ National Election Board of Ethiopia, “ከኢትዮጵያ ብሔራዊ ምርጫ ቦርድ የመራጮች ምዝገባ ሂደት ላይ የተስተዋለ የሕግ ጥሰትን እስመልኩ የተሰጠ መግለጫ,” public statement issued during the voter registration period of the Seventh General Election.

In the Sidama region, at a registration station in Wosha Kebele, Wondo Genet Woreda, North Sidama Zone, during an observation starting from 4:00 local time in the morning (10:00 AM standard time) on Megabit 11, 2018 E.C., it was noted that when a significant number of elderly and hard-of-hearing citizens came to register, officers responded to their questions in low tones that were inaudible to them.

Also in the Sidama region, at the Beg Tera station in Mesalemiya Kebele of Aleta Wondo Woreda, South Sidama Zone, on Megabit 13, 2018 E.C., the officers failed to select assistants from among the other registrants present for two registrants with disabilities who required support, contrary to the procedure the law prescribes.

5.4.10.12. Threats, Attacks, and Intimidation

In the South Wollo Zone of the Amhara region, at a registration station in Kebele 01 of Mekane Selam Town Administration, South Wollo Zone, threats and intimidation were sent via SMS to the personal phones of election officers. This act was committed by armed groups. Since the threats were particularly directed at female officers, male officers replaced them to continue the work after that day, as observed by CECOE's observer. According to a report sent on Miyazia 02, 2018 E.C. from Kebele 01 of Ambasel Woreda, South Wollo Zone, it was revealed that the armed group published the names of election officers on social media. Similarly, in Gazo Woreda of North Wollo, extreme intimidation was directed at officers after armed groups released a statement warning they would take action against anyone participating in the electoral process. Observers noted that lists of officers' names were being shared on various Facebook pages along with messages warning them to "be careful."

In East Gojjam and Debre Markos, in Kebele 02 of Awabel Woreda, East Gojjam Zone, on Megabit 7, 2018 E.C., an election officer was abducted by armed group fighters who opposed the election being held in the area. The militants forced the officer to post a video message on his personal TikTok account expressing regret for his actions and stating that the election should not take place. In a specific place called Aba Bizuneh Gurd or Engedim in Kebele 09 of Debre Markos Town, on Megabit 16, 2018 E.C., an attack by armed groups forces resulted in the killing of one male and one female election officer, while another officer was abducted. CECOE's observers noted that voters and security personnel on site were also killed. In Debre Tabor Town, on Megabit 14 and 15, 2018 E.C., the constituency coordinator received repeated threatening calls on their personal phone, but the work continued without interruption.

In the Wag Hemra and West Gojjam zones, in Dehana Woreda of the Wag Hemra Zone, on Ginbot 07, 2018 E.C., at 7:00 in the night (1:00 AM standard time), armed groups abducted the registration station head, the woreda's deputy head of the education office, and the head of the Kebele sub-municipality. The deputy head of the education office was shot and wounded in the thigh while attempting to escape and was hospitalized, while a heavy ransom was demanded to release the Kebele municipality and registration station heads. In Merawi Town, West Gojjam

Zone, on Megabit 19, 2018 E.C., an officer who received a written threat from armed groups saying, "If you do not stop your work, action will be taken against you," stopped working and relocated to Bahir Dar for his safety. In Digo Tsiyon Woreda, on Megabit 8, 2018 E.C., an individual who had arrived to train trainee officers was abducted by armed men, and his whereabouts remained unknown as of Megabit 17. Consequently, no voter registration was conducted in the area. Around Dago Tsiyon in Bibugn Woreda, on Megabit 23, 2018 E.C., the observer noted that no registration took place due to the area being surrounded by armed groups and heavy gunfire. In Dega Damot Woreda, West Gojjam Zone, on Miyazia 14, 2018 E.C., armed groups took control of the woreda and issued threats and orders forbidding anyone from participating in electoral activities.

In the Awi Zone, in Jawi Woreda of the Awi Zone, on Megabit 23, 2018 E.C., an unidentified group threw a bomb at the Fendika 01B registration station, injuring a female police officer who was serving as an election officer and a citizen who was in a nearby coffee/tea house.

In the Oromia region, in Tiyo Woreda of the Arsi Zone, in the area of Chraro Daget, armed groups took control of the locality, leading to an exchange of fire between the armed group and the Oromia Special Force on Yekatit 19, 2018 E.C., in which members of the Special Force, militia, and Federal Police were killed. Consequently, three stations (Makro Primary School, Akiya Primary School, and Tebote registration station) were closed and relocated to the Kebele office. In Haro Choroqa Kebele, Nole Kaba Woreda, on Ginbot 09, 2018 E.C., a male station head and a female registrar were abducted from their homes, and they were released on Ginbot 15, 2018 E.C., after a ransom was paid.

In the Sidama region, at Gogeti registration station in Gotera Kechema Kebele, Wondo Genet Woreda, North Sidama Zone, election officers were beaten on Megabit 27, 2018 E.C. The chairperson of the registration station was severely injured and hospitalized. The beating was carried out by members of the local community, who reportedly did so because, "Our request to be administered under the Oromia Region has not been answered; therefore, we do not need an election," as confirmed by CECOE's observer.

In the South Ethiopia region, in Bode Special Constituency under Selamago Woreda, South Omo Zone, CECOE's observer noted that traveling from place to place to observe was difficult due to clashes between pastoralists. Consequently, officers were forced to carry registers and cards to conduct registration by moving around markets and schools. At Temalye registration station in Bena Tsema Woreda, on Megabit 24, 2018 E.C., three bandits (one of whom was a former candidate) attempted to abduct and kill officers, forcing them to abandon the station. In Bura Kebele of the same woreda, on Megabit 27, 2018 E.C., an armed individual intimidated officers and forced them to leave the area; later, the officers were escorted back to work by police.

Returning to Nole Kaba Woreda in Oromia: In Haro Choroqa Kebele, Nole Kaba Woreda, a male and a female election officer were abducted from their homes at night by unidentified armed

group. Of the abductees, the male was the registration station head, and the female was the registrar. Following the abduction, they were released on 15/07/2018 (Ginbot 15, 2018 E.C.) after an undisclosed ransom was paid. The abductees suffered no physical injuries. After the abduction, other election officers replaced them to carry out voter registration; the registration station was not closed due to the incident.

In the North Shewa Zone of the Oromia region, in Hidebu Abote Woreda, the Murfe 21 station (0418601401101), which had been open on Megabit 16, 2018 E.C., remained closed for the whole of Megabit 19 and 20, 2018 E.C., the armed group active in the area being reported as present. The Firew Morofe Ha1 station in the same woreda was likewise closed on the morning of Saturday, Megabit 19, 2018 E.C., and had not opened by 5:00 local time (11:00 AM standard time).

5.4.10.13. Registration Not Commenced and Stations Not Opened

In some woredas, in the Amhara region, CECOE's long-term observers reported that no registration station had been established, no election materials had arrived, or no registration of any kind was taking place, on dates well into and in several cases past the close of the extended registration period on 22 April 2026 (Miyazia 14, 2018 E.C.). These reports are recorded here because they bear on the completeness of the register itself, and therefore on the entitlement of the citizens of those localities to take part in the election at all. In almost every case the immediate cause reported was the presence or control of the armed group and the associated threat to officials and registrants.

North Shewa Zone: In Tarmaber and Debre Sina Woredas, no registration had begun as of Miyazia 25, 2018 E.C., no materials had arrived, and no election officials had come, even though three station areas were assessed as being in “green” security status according to the observers and local authorities had indicated their readiness to cooperate. In Shewa Robit Woreda, no station had opened as of Miyazia 28, 2018 E.C. and none had opened by Ginbot 6, 2018 E.C.; although militia, police, and Defense Force units operated in the area, the community feared the armed group's threats of action against both officials and registrants. In Hagere Mariam na Kesem Woreda, registration had not started as of Miyazia 28 and no station was open by Ginbot 6, 2018 E.C. due to security reasons.

In Moretna Jiru Woreda, no registration had taken place and no station had been established as of Ginbot 7, 2018 E.C. In Moja na Wadera Woreda, no station had been established and no registration had begun as of Ginbot 7, 2018 E.C., despite government peacekeeping forces, militia, and the Defense Force having been stationed in the area for more than two years.

East and West Gojjam Zones: In Gozamin Woreda, only 12 of the 49 registration stations planned by NEBE had been opened as of Megabit 19, 2018 E.C., all of them within 10 to 15 kilometres of the zone seat and operable under security escort; the remaining stations lay in areas under armed groups presence and remained unopened. In Debay Tilatgen Woreda, the Sindabo

station in Koye Kebele (0315314031001) remained closed from Megabit 17 to Megabit 19, 2018 E.C. owing to security problems, opening only on Megabit 19. In Sede Woreda, no station had been established in kebele 16 as of Megabit 8, 2018 E.C. existence of security threat , and no voter registration of any kind took place anywhere in the woreda between Miyazia 28 and Ginbot 7, 2018 E.C. In Dembecha Woreda of the West Gojjam Zone, no station had opened and no registration had begun as of Megabit 4, again as of Megabit 16, and still as of Miyazia 3, 2018 E.C. due to security reasons.

North Wollo, South Wollo, and Wag Hemra Zones: In Raya Kobo Woreda, voter registration had not started and no station had opened as of Ginbot 6, 2018 E.C. The same was true of Woldia Town Administration on the same date. In Legahida Woreda of the South Wollo Zone, no registration had begun as of Ginbot 7, 2018 E.C. because pressure from the armed group had prevented election materials from being distributed to the stations. In Ambasel Woreda of the same zone, no registration had begun and no station had opened as of Ginbot 7, and the position was unchanged on Ginbot 14, 2018 E.C.

South Gondar Zone: In Nefas Mewcha, no registration of any kind had begun as of Miyazia 24, 2018 E.C.; armed group entered the town on the night of Yekatit 9, 2018 E.C. and withdrew the same day, and registration was expected to begin only once Defense Force control was restored. In Simada Woreda, no station had opened and no registration had taken place as of Miyazia 24, 2018 E.C. due to security concerns. In Addis Zemen Town, no registration of any kind had started as of Miyazia 25, 2018 E.C.; stations in kebeles 01 to 04 opened only after Miyazia 26 and then closed again from Miyazia 3 to Miyazia 9, 2018 E.C. In Libo Kemkem Town, no voter registration of any kind had begun as of Miyazia 24, 2018 E.C., and in Ambesame Town of Dera Woreda none had started as of Miyazia 26, 2018 E.C. In Sedie Muja Woreda as of Miyazia 26, 2018 E.C., with no station open and no registration under way; armed group threatened on social media that action would be taken against anyone who registered or who registered others, and warned the community against participation as rumours spread of an impending Defense Force entry. In Tach Gayint Woreda, from Yekatit 2 until Megabit 22, 2018 E.C. no station was established due to the volatile security situation. On Ginbot 8, 2018 E.C. while the rural kebeles remained inaccessible.

North Gondar and Central Gondar Zones: In Dabat Town Administration, no station existed and no registration of any kind was taking place as of Ginbot 7 and again as of Ginbot 9, 2018 E.C., owing to pressure from armed group elements and to instability, and NEBE had in addition supplied no materials of any kind. In Tach Armachiho Woreda of the Central Gondar Zone, no voter registration was taking place at the Muse Banbi station (031310102950) on Megabit 7, 2018 E.C.

5.4.11. Critical Incidents Related to the Electoral Process

The incidents that follow trace election day itself in roughly the order a voter would have lived it: the siting and opening of the station, the materials on the table, the campaigning that pressed in from outside, the assistance offered and imposed inside the booth, the marking of ballots by hands that had no business holding them, the interruptions of gunfire and rain, and finally the count, which is where the day's story most often turned.

5.4.11.1. Polling Stations Established in Prohibited Locations

In Addis Ababa, a polling station in Yeka Woreda 1 was established in a tent pitched inside a health center compound. A station in Addis Ketema Sub-city Woreda 01 (1454501080107, Sebatanya) was established inside a health facility. Stations were likewise observed inside health facilities in Kirkos Woreda 6 (Cherkos 02 Health Center, 1453307020101) and inside the Addis Hiwot Health Center compound in Gulele Woreda 6 (1452606090107), while in Nifas Silk Lafto Woreda 11 a station operated at the Hana Mariam Health Center while the facility was providing services.

In the Amhara region, the Antsokiya-and-Gemza station in the North Shewa Zone was established inside a health facility named Mekoy Health 3Le_1. In South Gondar Zone, Guna Bage Midir Woreda, stations at Kimir Dingay town (310819140101 and 310819140102) and at Behamer Wuha (310819140103) were established inside or immediately adjacent to military camps, with soldiers present in or around the stations. The Alkit Wuha station in Sedi Muja Woreda (316009141304) was set up on the veranda of a private residence whose owners lived in the same house, and the Arga No. 1 station in Gidan Woreda (0311520070303) was established inside a health center fence, with voters casting ballots seated on patient seats.

In the Oromia region, polling station 0431103360105 in Mojo town, East Shewa Zone, was established inside the Mojo health center. The Gende Tulu Hofe station in Sude Woreda, Arsi Zone, was established inside a health facility, as were the Kukuba Katebu station in Yabelo Woreda, Borena Zone (0435908160701) and the Kofele 01 station in West Arsi Zone (inside the Kofele health facility). The Dunfeta Feyta station in Kore Woreda, West Arsi Zone (042905651101) was established inside a police camp, and in Negele Arsi town two stations (including 420609650804) operated inside the Gorbi Derare Hospital.

In Dire Dawa City Administration, a polling station in Woreda 02 took a room inside Sabian Primary Hospital, where voting was conducted.

In the Harari region, a station in Abadir Woreda was established inside the Gandhi Fero health center.

In the Sidama region, the Wirsha Derese Mender station in Wondo Genet Woreda, Northern Sidama (851608040605) was established inside a residential compound whose residents remained in the same house.

In the Southwest Ethiopia region, station 1143411102201 in Gewata Woreda, Kaffa Zone, was established inside a health facility.

In the Oromia region, the Keela Fayyaa station (4334004650702) in Kubi Guta kebele, Shashamane Woreda, West Arsi Zone, was established inside a health post. In Addis Ababa, station 1452706030108 in Arada Sub-city Woreda 7 was sited immediately adjacent to a hotel. In the Sidama region, at the Mesafint Zeleke rental-house station in Tula Woreda, Hawassa City Administration (851206011111), the voting area was so confined that voters overlapped one another and could see how others marked their ballots, so that the physical setup of the station itself defeated the secrecy of the vote.

5.4.11.2. Ballot Boxes Sealed Without Being Shown to Be Empty

Election day's first act of transparency is a simple one: before the ballot box is sealed, it is held up and shown to everyone present to be empty. At the Arga No. 1 station in Gidan Woreda of the South Wollo Zone (0311520070303), the box stood in an open location all day but was never turned over and shown. In Fogera Woreda of the South Gondar Zone (031116140402), officials sealed the box without showing observers that it was empty, and at the kebele 04 station in neighboring Woreta (311116140403) the box was likewise sealed unseen at opening. In Adiarkay Woreda of the North Gondar Zone (0307903081204), voting simply began without the box being displayed, and at the Dildiy station in Debir kebele of Andabet Woreda, South Gondar (310513140704), the box was sealed without being shown to those present. In Debre Markos town, at the Ababa Bizuneh Gurd area station, unrest kept the observer from arriving at opening; the box was reported never to have been shown empty, and the count was later conducted away from the voting location.

The same omission was recorded beyond Amhara. At the Genet Abo kebele station in Haru Woreda, West Wollega Zone of Oromia (0426401691801), voting started without the box being displayed. In the South Ethiopia region, the officials of the Genet Abo station in Beto Town Administration, Gofa Zone, sealed their box unshown, and at the nearby Lomate station (948806120402) the observer had the station opened at 5:30 a.m. only to watch the officials carry in a ballot box that was already sealed.

A related failure was the placing of ballot boxes where no one could watch them. At the Rasho station in the Abdella compound in Maya town, East Hararge Zone of Oromia (0428004340105), the box sat throughout the day in a position not visible to those present. At station 316402120306 in Sekota Town Administration, Wag Hemra Zone of Amhara, the station operated outdoors but the box was kept inside a container where it could not be clearly seen, and at station 0850402051601 in Bona Zuria Woreda of the Southern Sidama Zone, the boxes were placed in a location hidden from the observer. A box that cannot be seen cannot be vouched for, and at these stations the day's record begins with a blank.

5.4.11.3. Incomplete Polling Station Materials

Most stations opened with everything they needed; a handful opened with gaps that mattered as the day wore on. In Andabet Woreda of the South Gondar Zone, a station near the municipality had neither the complaint form nor the results declaration and reconciliation form, and the Dildiy station (310513140704) lacked all three. The consequence of such gaps became visible in Fogera town, kebele 03 (0311116140402), where no indelible finger ink was available: when voters asked why their fingers were not being marked, the officials inked their hands with an ordinary washable pen. At the Kistani station in Kutaber Woreda, South Wollo (313016131502), the observer noted at about 10:00 a.m. that there was no reconciliation form at all.

Elsewhere the shortages were briefer but of the same kind. In Addis Ababa, the Anbessa Gibi station in Kolfe Keranio Woreda 13 (1453705070109) opened at 5:30 a.m. without a complaint form, which arrived some minutes later, while at station 1453103050109 in Nifas Silk Lafto Woreda 11 there was no complaint reception form at any point. At the Woreta kebele 04 station in South Gondar (311116140403), the results reconciliation and complaint forms were never filled in at all. In the Southwest Ethiopia region, the Micha station in Chida Town Administration (1145405200801) had no complaint submission form, and at the Diya Orora station in Cheta Woreda of the Kaffa Zone (1143116101401) indelible ink was still missing at midday. One station was missing something the law counts as essential as any form: at station 1252004100101 in Wantawo Woreda of the Nuer Zone, Gambella, no female election official was present at all, contrary to the requirement that every officer team include at least one woman.

5.4.11.4. Errors and Mix-ups in Voting Materials

In Addis Ababa, the ballot papers for the candidates of Constituency 28 were mistakenly delivered to Constituency 17; at the Ayat Zone 3 sub-station in Lemi Kura Sub-city, voting was suspended until the error was corrected and then resumed. In Woreda 01 (1453905090517), ballot papers simply ran out mid-day and were replenished after about ten minutes. In Dire Dawa, station 1554701010603 discovered at about 9:00 a.m. that its indelible ink was missing; it was replenished within the hour and work continued. At the Airport kebele Condominium station in Gondar Zuria Woreda, Central Gondar (311810022204), voters stood queued at 6:00 a.m. while the supplies were still on the road, and the 40-minute delay in opening drew public complaints. One error was administrative rather than material, and harder to cure: at the Baqala Dhaadhi station in Kersa Woreda, East Hararge Zone of Oromia, the station's own identification code changed between morning and afternoon, recorded first as 429409220102 and later as 429409220202, an inconsistency that would prevent the reliable attribution of the station's results.

5.4.11.5. Distribution of Unstamped Ballot Papers

An unstamped ballot paper is a vote waiting to be invalidated, and the voter who casts one rarely knows it. The problem surfaced early in Addis Ababa, where at the Tesfa Birhan Consumers

station in Arada Woreda 7 (1452706030103) some 15 voters had been issued entirely unstamped papers by 7:30 a.m. More often it surfaced only at the count, when nothing could be done for the voters concerned. At the Nono Gomata 1 station in Borena Woreda, South Wollo (0308405130401), six unstamped ballots emerged during counting; the officials held they must be invalid, Prosperity Party representatives argued that the fault was the Board's and the votes should stand, and after much dispute the ballots were ruled invalid. At the Harbu Ha 2 station in Kalu Woreda (314907130205), some 500 invalid votes were found at the count. In Chilga Woreda of the Central Gondar Zone, at the Lay 22 / Ha2 station (307214020104), about 24 voter cards lacking the stamp on the back were noticed only during the count and were pulled out and invalidated, and in Lay Armachiho, at the Kerker Bale Egziabher No. 2 station (313101022401), about 12 papers issued without the back stamp in the press of the crowd were all invalidated on review. At the Majetel station in Legahida Woreda (317301130202), opposition party observers asked that numerous unstamped papers be counted, and after discussion with the chairperson it was agreed they would not be. The starkest case was in the Central Ethiopia region, at the Agode Mazoriya station in the Silte Zone (744908051601): at the very start of the count it emerged that at least 60 voters had been issued unstamped papers. The observer alerted the officials and the practice was corrected, but those 60 votes were already lost.

5.4.11.6. Campaigning Inside Polling Stations or Within the 200-Meter Radius

In Addis Ababa City Administration, Addis Ketema Sub-city, Woreda 4, at the Sefere Selam pre-primary school station, CECOE observed a Prosperity Party representative transmitting campaign messages, including playing the Prime Minister's speech aloud on his phone. At the Mango station in Arada Woreda 7 (145340605012), two voters cast ballots wearing caps bearing the Prosperity Party emblem.

In the Amhara region, East Gojjam Zone, at the Koye station in Debay Tilat Gin Woreda (code 031531404030201), Prosperity Party leaders were observed campaigning within the 200-meter radius. In Enarj Enawga Woreda, kebele 01 station (0308213031901), a large banner bearing Prosperity posters, candidate names, and symbols remained about 150 meters from the station. In Tarmaber Woreda, Debre Sina town (02 Le, 308332062301), election officials advised voters to turn out for only one party (Prosperity).

In the Oromia region, Horo Gudru Wollega Zone, Shambu Woreda, at the station near the Fikadu rental house, a Prosperity Party emblem stood 35 meters from the station. In Kore Woreda, West Arsi Zone, the kebele chairperson was seen campaigning for the Prosperity Party near the Dunfeta Feyta station at dawn on election day. In East Hararge Zone, Meta Woreda, Kosta station (422708220601), campaign posters were observed within the 200-meter radius.

In the Sidama region, at Hawassa City Administration station 0851207010120, a Prosperity Party agent was seen campaigning among voters queuing to vote; at the Agamso Sefer 02 station

(851208010110), ruling party members posing as members of other parties and as observers campaigned among queued voters, and five individuals bearing Prosperity membership IDs invited voters to lunch to persuade them. In Eastern Sidama Zone, Bona Zuria (station 850001001602), woreda officials entered without permission and urged voting citizens to "vote for the Prosperity Party." In Northern Sidama, at station 0851303040203, Prosperity Party representatives campaigned among queued voters.

In the South Ethiopia region, Gofa Zone, Beto Town Administration, at station 948806120402 (School Mender), voters arrived carrying and displaying flyers bearing the scales and wheat-sheaf symbols in an attempted campaign act. In Wolaita Zone, Humbo Woreda, a banner bearing the Prosperity Party emblem was posted directly opposite the Youth Recreation Center station (944429070105), and in Bayray Koshay Woreda ruling party agents campaigned less than 200 meters from the Seri Atelacha station, telling arriving voters to "vote for the wheat." In the South Omo Zone, Male Woreda (Kati Bakan, 0946502081501), political parties campaigned within the 200-meter radius. In the SNNP region, Gamo Zone, Garda Marta Woreda, at the Gokele primary school station (0944719090501), an election official openly campaigned for the ruling party and assisted voters accordingly.

In the Sidama region, at the Addisu Gebeya Mender station in Hawassa City Administration (851205010305), voters who had already cast their ballots were observed canvassing and mobilising those who had not yet voted. In the Oromia region, East Bale Zone, Legahida Woreda, at the Beltu 02 station in Beltu town (428501201102), election officials were observed instructing voters to vote for a single person or party. In the Amhara region, East Gojjam Zone, at a second Enarj Enawga station (308213031903), Prosperity Party symbols and materials were observed within 100 metres of the station.

In the Southwest Ethiopia region, Bench Sheko Zone, Mizan Aman City Administration (station 1147208032702), a Prosperity Party emblem was observed on a light pole within the 200-meter radius. In the Amhara region, Awi Zone, Zigem Woreda, Kilaj Ha station (315105111302), an observer of the Peace for Ethiopia Coalition party campaigned to voters as they entered to vote. In Dire Dawa, 06 kebele (155701010608), numerous candidate banners and campaign papers were observed within about 100 meters of the station.

5.4.11.7. Repeated and Unauthorized Assistance to Voters

The law allows a voter who needs help to choose an assistant. Election observers reported a recurring pattern across multiple stations where unauthorized individuals repeatedly assisted voters without their consent or request. In Addis Ababa at the Sefere Selam pre-primary school station in Addis Ketema Woreda 4, unauthorized individuals assisted voters repeatedly; one voter, having cast his own ballot, went on to assist two more people, and the box supervisor was observed entering the secrecy booth to assist 15. At the Idir House station in Kirkos Woreda 03, a woman with no authority to assist helped more than 14 voters and slipped out when the station

head noticed her, changing her clothes as she left; at the Menafesha 1 station in the same sub-city (1453105020101), an unidentified woman came and went between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m., assisting voter after voter. At the Tenfyelesh Gibi station in Gulele Woreda 2 (1452603090107), a voter returned repeatedly after casting her own ballot to assist three elderly people, and at the Tesfa Kokeb station in Lideta Woreda 9 (1454107010107), officials at about 10:00 a.m. assisted two people said not to need help because “they came from the provinces,” and marked the party of their own choice for them.

In the Amhara region the assistance became direction. At the Filakit Le1 station in Meket Woreda, North Wollo (0313907070102), a party representative assisted different voters more than once. In Zigem Woreda of the Awi Zone (0315105111302), the officials issuing voter cards marked them for some ten voters. At the Masha Le station in Mekdela Woreda, South Wollo (0314104130204), officials brought in a local resident “to help us”; he assisted more than 20 people, deliberately following even voters who needed no help, filling in their ballots himself and watching whom they voted for. At Akesta station 1 in Legambo Woreda (013403070301), a single official shepherded more than 50 voters through inking and voting. At the Harbu Ha 2 station in Kalu Woreda (314907130205), the chairperson assisted more than 20 illiterate voters before midday, adding her own input for those who said they did not know whom to choose, and at Gondar Zuria's Polling Station Three (311810020503), two local youths went into the secrecy booth itself with voters, telling everyone, “this is what you vote for.”

Back in the capital, the same story repeated with different faces. At the Medhanialem Idir House station in Addis Ketema Woreda 4 (1453803040104), the box supervisor circulated assisting people, and a female box-supervisor was observed entering the screened voting area to “assist” more than 17 voters. At the Meznagna 10 station in Arada Woreda 7 (1452706030101), unidentified persons walked in alongside literate voters and assisted them anyway. At the Entoto Amba school station in Gulele Woreda 6 (1452601090117), more than five Prosperity-trained individuals worked in shifts, posing as observers under the guise of helping, telling voters “vote for this,” changing clothes to re-enter, and intimidating CECOE's observer. At the May Chew Health Center station in Gulele Woreda 02 (1452603090105), three women who had already voted returned at least four times each to vote and to assist; the station head, though informed, ignored it.

The pattern ran south and west. In Oromia, at the Burka Jato station in Nekemte City Administration (0432405390101), an official assisted those who needed help and those who did not, more than once, and at Mugi Filfili in Anfillo Woreda, Kellelem Wollega (434806310403), officials entered the secrecy area to assist people who did not need help. In the Central Ethiopia region, officials at the Timbaro Fera station in Damboya Woreda (745911070201) repeatedly assisted people not entitled to support; at the Agode Mazoriya station in Silte Woreda (744908051601), voters needing an assistant were helped more than once; at the Limo 02 Shemsa Jemaya station in Shashogo, Hadiya Zone (746210022902), the box supervisor and party

representatives assisted voters who did not understand the procedure; and at the Shiferaw station in West Badewacho (747707021103), officials assisted literate youths who needed no help at all.

Sidama produced some of the day's most industrious helpers. At the Dona station in Gorche Woreda, Northern Sidama (0850910042012), the queue controller assisted more than 30 voters. At the Mesafint Zeleke rental house in Tula Woreda, Hawassa City Administration (851206011111), station staff including the queue controller assisted voters more than ten times, the queue controller repeatedly abandoning his post to do so. At five stations across Malga Woreda, at Kalifo, Mente, Gola 01, Halade Chanco, and Halade Sefer (851604040409, -403, -402, -406, and -407), officials or unidentified persons assisted voters more than once, in one case walking straight into the secrecy booth. At Weshe Nesoyama Sefer in Wondo Genet Woreda (81604080607), the female queue controller hinted to an estimated fifty or more voters to choose one party, marking ballots and placing them in the box herself until she was ordered to stop at midday, and at the Farmers Training Center in Derara Woreda (0850207020603), the female queue controller and the box supervisor together assisted voters more than ten times.

In the South Ethiopia region, the box supervisor and a male queue controller at the Green Area No. 1 station in Selamber Town Administration assisted voters more than ten times, and at the Dembaye Green Area No. 1 station (0945804092202) the box supervisor, the marshal, and the ballot-paper distributor followed voters, literate voters included, into the secrecy booth, harassing them to vote for the officials' preferred party. At Upper Argoba Afiya Meda in Derashe Woreda, Gardula Zone (942402100203), an official entered the secret voting area again and again to assist ten or more voters who needed no help at all. At the Delma station in Gedeb Woreda, Gedee Zone (0943212110608), the box supervisor and marshal followed voters into the booth, and at Segen Zuria in the Konso Zone (0945301061001), coordinators and observers inside the station assisted every voter more than once, "to show them how to vote." The most calculated case came from Chenchu Zuria in the Gamo Zone (0941321090303), where Prosperity Party observers invited the opposition observers and officials to lunch; while the process stood unwatched, officials followed 40 women and 27 men who needed no support into the booth.

The record closes with smaller but telling instances. At the 02 kebele Catholic-area station in Pawe Woreda, Benishangul-Gumuz (639207072501), an official assisted three voters who did not need help, closely showing them directions. In Dire Dawa, at the Dichaso Meredaja Idir station (1554701010601), officials at about 2:30 p.m., saying "let us help adults who can vote by themselves," went in with voters and marked the party of the voters' choice on their cards, and at the Birhan Consumers station (155701010608), the assigned ballot-box guard entered the secret voting area with nearly every voter, urging them to "vote for the representative I want."

CECOE recorded a substantial further body of incidents of the same character. In Addis Ababa, at the Akalawi Meredaja Idir Ha station in Lideta Woreda 1 (1453401010114), a Prosperity Party representative brought people in from outside during afternoon voting and, exploiting the absence of any other party representative, took them directly into the secrecy booth to "assist"

them. At station 1453105020101 in Bole Woreda 01, officials other than the chairperson assisted voters who had no assistants, which they attributed to the size of the crowd, and at the Atsede Hitsanat school station in Dire Dawa (1554701010602), a woman who was not in the queue returned repeatedly from about 2:00 p.m. to assist more than five voters.

In the Amhara region, at the 6Le1 station in Atse Tewodros Woreda, Bahir Dar City (0306301100125), a person other than the chairperson assisted different voters through the morning, and around midday officials resumed assisting voters even after the chairperson had forbidden it. The Awi Zone supplied three more instances: at the Amboka and Gefecha Le station in Zigem Woreda (315105110502), officials escorted about three farmers who needed no help to the ballot box, showing them “do it like this”; at the Kilaj Ha station (315105110201), a person other than the chairperson repeatedly assisted various voters; and at the Anguay station in Guangua Woreda (307010110801), various unauthorized persons did the same. In Tach Armachiho Woreda, Central Gondar (03166070205004), a mobile observer watched election officials give assistance to more than ten people who did not need support, and at the GBC station in Kombolcha City Administration, South Wollo (314817130505), an observer of the Women's Federation was seen assisting voters on her own initiative.

Still in Amhara, at the municipality compound station in Minjar Shenkora Woreda, North Shewa (305709061206), an individual other than the chairperson spent the entire day inside the station assisting different voters. At the kebele 01 station in Shewarobit town (0315714060601), a badge-wearing woman of unclear responsibility assisted several voters whether or not they needed help, and officials other than the station head were observed doing the same on four occasions. At the Ayne Eyesus station in Bugna Woreda, North Wollo (306710070902), the chairperson repeatedly assisted voters who did not need it. At the Mekane Selam kebele 2 Ha station in Borena Woreda (30845130202), an official assisted some 14 voters who required no assistance, and at the Landmark Yekatit 25 station in Kombolcha (314817130202), officials other than the chairperson assisted voters three to four times. At the Majete Ha station in Legahida Woreda (317301130201), a Prosperity Party observer assisted five voters who needed no help, showing them where to mark, folding their ballots, and inserting them into the box on their behalf. At the Layfayda station in Sekota Zuria Woreda, Wag Hemra (316403123202), various persons other than the chairperson assisted voters more than once. At the Chila station in Janamora Woreda, North Gondar (312409082505), the queue controller assisted voters repeatedly and issued blanket voting instructions to the whole queue, and at the Adiarkay town kebele 01 station (0307903081201), kebele employees gave voters unrestricted assistance with the indulgence of the election official.

Elsewhere, at station 432407390109 in Burka Jato kebele, Nekemte, assistance was given by persons other than the queue coordinator more than once at about 10:30 a.m., and the same occurred around midday at the Taywan Terra station in kebele 02 of Robe Woreda, Arsi Zone (433209090801). At the Aratber Mukere health center station in Silte Woreda, Central Ethiopia (744908050903), the election official repeatedly and unnecessarily assisted voters. In Sidama,

persons who were not election officials assisted voters at the Bona 01 Technical and Vocational station in Bona Zuria Woreda (850004031500), and four further Hawassa stations produced the same record: station 851207010103, where the queue controller assisted voters; the Aroni Mender station (085205010305), where officials other than the absent chairperson did so repeatedly; the Addisu Gebeya Mender station (851207010521), where the secrecy-box guard and other officials assisted voters four to five times; and the Beyene Shole station (851207010213), where a badge-wearing person presumed to be an observer repeatedly entered the secrecy booth. At station 850910040902 in Gorche Woreda, Northern Sidama, the queue controller was assisting between 30 and 35 people an hour and marking voters' ballot papers, while the queue itself was allowed to stand immediately beside the secrecy booth.

In the South Ethiopia region, at station 0944401100101 in Chenchä Zuria Woreda, a Prosperity Party representative and a youth civil-society observer assisted voters more than once and were made to stop only after EZEMA and Peace Party representatives objected, and at station 0943211100204 in Gedeb Town Administration, Gedeo Zone, the officials assisted some five to ten voters whenever the station chairperson stepped out to receive complaints. In the Southwest Ethiopia region, election officials, and in particular the chairperson, repeatedly entered the secret voting booth at the Debre Werk school station in South Bench Woreda (1147208201802); officials other than the chairperson repeatedly assisted voters at the Duba Shama (1143116101302) and Kushasha (1143116100801) stations in Cheta Woreda, more than ten people in the latter case; and at the Fikir Finance Sefer station in Awrada Woreda (1141506000301), a Prosperity Party agent assisted six of fourteen voters who needed no support, standing beside them as they voted and thereby violating the secrecy of the ballot.

5.4.11.8. Election Officials Marking Ballot Papers and Ballot-Box Stuffing

At the Ayne Eyesus station in Bugna Woreda, North Wollo Zone of Amhara (306710070902), the chairperson entered the voting booth on behalf of registered voters who were not physically present and filled in their ballots as though they had voted, while Prosperity Party members moved through the station coordinating voters and marking ballots for the party in voters' absence; voters at the same station were voting without finger inking. In Chilga Woreda of the Central Gondar Zone, at the Ha2 station (307214020104/307214020204), the night shift told its own story: at around 12:30 a.m., saying “the first ballot box is not full,” the election officials marked cards themselves and inserted them into the box, and during the count they were seen marking blank papers, recounting them, and adding a second mark to House of Peoples' Representatives ballots on which a candidate had already been chosen. From the entrance search point onward, officials at this station had been marking voters' cards themselves before agreeing to put them in the box.

In the Awi Zone, at the Waksat Ha and Le stations in Zigem Woreda (315105110502) and the Anbuka and Gefecha Aligim station (315105110201), voter cards were collected from individuals, marked against the voters' wishes, and inserted into the box. In Ayehu Guagusa

Woreda, at Winberma Shinbi 01 (317705050403), the election coordinator and the queue controller took the ballot cards of ten or more voters who were perfectly able to vote for themselves, marked them, and dropped them in. At the Jerjaro station in Kalu Woreda, South Wollo, kebele leaders cast votes for registered voters who were absent, and when asked why, they answered simply: “a directive was sent to us; we must fulfill it.”

The practice was not confined to Amhara. In Oromia, the chairperson of the Zone 2 station in Gololcha Woreda, East Bale (0428508202502) marked ballot papers, and marked ballots were handed to eight voters; at the Dile Tiyara station in Bedele Town, Buno Bedele Zone (421303180102), Prosperity Party representatives marked unvoted ballot papers during the count. In the Central Ethiopia region, at the Timbaro Fera station in Damboya Woreda (745911070201), Prosperity Party cadres and election officials were seen from about 5:00 p.m. casting more than 50 votes for the ruling party with no other party representative present to object, and the station closed at 7:00 p.m. with the problem unresolved. At the Bonosha station in the Hadiya Zone (746212020501), kebele residents who had arrived from various places “corrected” invalid ballots during the count by voting on them themselves for the ruling party, while the five officials present did nothing. In Hawassa City, at station 851207010416, officials added votes for the Prosperity Party from 10:05 p.m. to 1:00 a.m. and again during the next day's count; earlier that same day a kebele official had ordered the count stopped shortly after it began.

In the Afar region, the officials of the Bulu Blue station in Kori Woreda, Awsi Rasu Zone (0204408011501) dispensed with the voters altogether: they chose the candidates they wanted, inserted the ballots themselves, and collected the cards of arriving voters while telling them to go home. In Dire Dawa, officials at station 1554701010601 were observed marking ballot papers, and at the Atsede Hitsanat school station (1554701010602) an official marked a ballot during the count and put it in the box. In the Gambella region, at the Abaro station in Abobo Woreda, Anywaa Zone (1251801041301), the observer likewise witnessed officials marking ballot papers.

At other stations the marking took the form of steering hands rather than replacing them. At the Woreta kebele 04 station in South Gondar (311116140403), officials told arriving voters “mark here,” showing them where the ruling party stood on the paper, and at the Youth Center station in Este Woreda the chairperson marked ballots for an estimated six or more people, telling them “add it here.” At the Tana 4 Ha 2 station in Bahir Dar City (0306301101916), the official escorting assisted voters to the box directed their choices, and officials were seen marking papers for their preferred candidate. In the North Shewa Zone, at the Sela Dingay town station in Mojana Wedera Woreda and the Sindew Girat station in Mida Woremo Woreda, officials went into the secrecy area with voters whether they wanted help or not and coerced them to choose the party the officials wanted. In the SNNP region, the election official at the Teyita station in Bonke Woreda, Gamo Zone (0943308101003) pressured and coerced voters toward the body he wanted, and in the Southwest Ethiopia region an official in the Sisinda area of Chena Woreda, Kaffa Zone entered the booth and filled in more than 20 votes, officials at the Sisinda Youth Container

House station (1148902300106) were seen marking papers, and an official in Gewata Woreda (1143411101201) cast votes on behalf of five or more people.

Verification confirmed a further set of instances. In Oromia, the station head at the station behind the Galma Burqa hall in kebele 01 of Robe Woreda, Arsi Zone (433209090702) was observed at about 10:00 a.m. writing on more than ten ballot papers, and officials at the News Xaabiya station in Gidami Woreda, Kellem Wollega (0426513314402) were seen marking papers. In Amhara, officials at the Gishnet 02 station in Legahida Woreda (317301130903) received arriving voters' ballots, marked them themselves, and handed them back to be dropped in the box; officials at kebele 03 of Fogera Woreda (0311116140402) instructed voters to vote for the ruling party and followed them in to show them where; and officials at the Behamer Wuha station in Guna Bage Midir Woreda (310819140103) were seen showing about three farmers where to mark. In the Central Ethiopia region, officials at the Mehal Habicho 01 municipality station in Gombora Woreda (745720020301) marked unmarked blank ballot papers. In Dire Dawa, at the Water Development station (1554601100203), officials were seen at about 3:30 p.m., after all registered voters had taken their cards, telling them to mark for one party, and in Eastern Sidama, at kebele 01 of Daela Woreda (850304000603), the ballot-paper distributor marked the larger of the two ballot papers for some 10 to 15 voters before handing the papers over.

5.4.11.9. Repeat Voting and Irregular Admission of Voters

In Addis Ababa, at the Zone 3 Idir station in Kirkos Woreda 03 (1453105020104), the station never settled into order: throughout the day people were seen changing clothes and returning to vote again, alongside more than ten violations of ballot secrecy that continued until the last voters finished. The same costume trick was played at the Debir kebele station in Debark Woreda, North Gondar (0307907080904), where people changed clothes and voted again, and where a nearby exchange of gunfire at about 6:25 p.m. later pushed the count behind the Dildiy police station. At the Kuami station in West Dembia Woreda, Central Gondar (309105021204), more than ten people voted from about noon without voter cards; questioned by the election committee, they said they had none and were simply let in. At the Gerchech station in South Mecha Woreda, West Gojjam (311406091601), police and officials brought people in off the street to vote although their names were not in the register and they had no cards. In Dire Dawa, at station 1554601010220, the morning crowd was such that more than ten card-holders voted at about 9:00 a.m. without their names being checked against the register.

In Derashe Woreda of the Gardula Zone, SNNP region (942402100604), the spouse of an EZEMA party representative tried to vote at two stations, Gengdoma and Warka, and was betrayed by the ink already on her hand; following a complaint, her vote was cancelled. In Gorka Woreda of the Kore (Amaro) Zone (0939703101701), the Prosperity Party complained that five underage persons had come to vote; their ages were checked and their names passed on.

A distinct pattern of lapses in the indelible-ink safeguard was recorded in the insecure areas of the Amhara region, where the voters themselves refused the ink, afraid that a marked finger would identify them to armed men as having voted. At the municipality compound station in Minjar Shenkora Woreda, North Shewa (305709061206), voters declined inking on account of the security situation and voted without it. At the Filakit Le1 station in Meket Woreda, North Wollo (031390707010), about ten people were permitted, at their own request, to vote uninked. At the Enatitu Mariam station in Debre Tabor town (310718140107), most morning voters refused the ink for fear of reprisal if their participation became known; in the afternoon some accepted while others voted entirely without it. A different cause produced the same result in the SNNP region, where at station 094402021001 in Laska Zuria, Basketo Special Zone, some 17 people voted without ink at about 6:00 p.m. because the registrar was overwhelmed by the queue. CECOE notes that these lapses, however understandable in their immediate context, removed the only safeguard against multiple voting at the stations concerned.

5.4.11.10. Denial of Voting

A smaller number of citizens came to vote and were turned away. In Dire Dawa, the two failures mirrored each other almost exactly. At the Guro Accord station (1554601010205), people who had registered online were told “your names are not in the system”: the system had assigned them to stations at random even though their kebele was correctly recorded, and they left without voting. At the Mermersa station (1554601010220), the opposite occurred, and manually registered people whose names did not appear in the register were admitted to vote merely for holding a card. The largest single denial took place in Gerese Woreda of the Gamo Zone, SNNP region (943318101502), where some 157 elderly and illiterate voters were barred from bringing their own helpers into the station. The station chairperson, who might have assisted them inside, failed to do so, and they went home without voting.

5.4.11.11. Unauthorized Individuals Inside Polling Stations

The polling station is, by law, a closed room: voters, officials, accredited agents, and accredited observers, and no one else. On election day it proved porous. In the Amhara region, unauthorized government officials without badges entered the Akesta 1 station in Legambo Woreda, South Wollo (013403070301), looked around, asked their questions, and left. At the Majete Ha station in Legahida Woreda (317301130201), a Prosperity Party woreda communications officer spent the entire day at the station, talking to people and asking questions, stepping out whenever other parties' observers arrived and returning when they left. At the neighboring Majetel station (317301130202), security coordinators and the kebele chairperson came in during the morning session, spoke with people in the queue, and moved in and out checking the process. At the Gondar Zuria station 311710021502, people without badges entered and left around noon without their purpose ever becoming clear, and in Bahir Dar City a badge-wearing person who was not an election official repeatedly assisted people at the Tana 1 Ha station (0306301101923),

while at the Gish Abay Shimabo 101 Ha station two unidentified persons kept the official supplied with information and support.

In Sidama the intruders were more assertive. At the Mesafint Zeleke rental-house station in Tula Woreda, Hawassa (851206011111), kebele leaders entered the secret voting area itself and coerced voters, while a ruling party member was present from the morning, organizing the queue, photographing voters even at the voting area, and involving himself in everything as though he were an official. At the Selam Consumers station (0851204010205), the ruling party representative ordered voters and even the election official about, unbadged persons came and went, and a woman set up and brewed coffee inside the station. At the Chebental No. 1 station (0851208010101), kebele leaders without Board badges entered and left repeatedly, harassing voters.

The Central Ethiopia region repeated the pattern. Kebele leaders without badges or permission acted as helpers and coordinators at the Agote Mazoriya station in Silte Woreda (744908051601). At the Mehal Habicho 01 station in Gombora Woreda, Hadiya Zone (745720020301), security forces entered without permission, unbadged kebele and municipality officials followed, and the officials themselves were seen improperly assisting voters and arbitrarily sorting valid from invalid ballots. At the 1st Oda station in Gimbichu Town Administration (748218020507), a woreda Prosperity Party leader entered without a badge and gave voters improper explanations. In Addis Ababa, from about 5:30 p.m., individuals who appeared to be government members entered the Firaj Building station in Kolfe Keranio Woreda 3 (1453609070104) without badges and organized the queuing voters until the election ended.

Southward, two ruling-party leaders entered the Birbisa school station in Segen Zuria Woreda, Konso Zone without permission and tried to collect information from party representatives. In North Ari Woreda (0940201000501), Prosperity Party zone and woreda leaders entered and spoke secretly with the station chairperson. In Sarmale Woreda of the Kore (Amaro) Zone (0939701051201), a zone colonel arrived to accuse the official of admitting an underage voter and took a threatening tone when she defended her verification. In Eastern Sidama, at the Bona Zuria station 850001001602, armed militia members entered the polling station without permission. The gentlest intrusion of the day was recorded at the Almu station in Pawe Woreda, Benishangul-Gumuz (639207001702), where a person entered with food, announced “let us serve food,” and left shortly afterwards.

Verification added further instances across four regions. In Oromia, the town mayor, the kebele 01 administrator, kebele party figures, and an armed member of the security forces entered the Birka Sefar station in Robe Woreda, Arsi Zone (433209090703) at about 11:00 a.m.; unauthorized persons entered the Kilinika Damme station in Negele Arsi Town Administration (420609650202) at about 7:00 a.m. and the Meskerem school station in Sayo Woreda, Kellem Wollega (424609310202) at about 3:00 p.m. In Sidama, people bringing tea and coffee entered the Kera Sefer station in Hawassa (851207010502) while persons who were not officials assisted

voters. In the Southwest Ethiopia region, a woreda leader entered the North Bench Agriculture Office station (1114750220070) attempting to coordinate activities and pressed CECOE's observer with unnecessary questions, and the kebele head, the security head, and Prosperity Party members were all present inside station 1143411101201 in Gewata Woreda, Kaffa Zone. In Amhara, persons other than election officials moved through the kebele 01 Ha1 station in Ambagiorgis town, Wegera Woreda (1703505081501) between about 6:00 and 10:00 a.m., and kebele leaders spent the afternoon around the Enatitu Mariam station in Debre Tabor town (310718140107) organizing queues and mobilizing voters. In the SNNP region, a zone administrator repeatedly entered the Jalo station in Gorka Woreda, Kore (Amaro) Zone (939704050101) without the chairperson's permission, drawing repeated complaints from the EZEMA representative.

5.4.11.12. Security-Related Disruptions

In Sekela Woreda, gunfire broke out in town before the observer could even reach the Gish Abay station (316301052602), and no election was taking place there. In Dera Woreda of the South Gondar Zone, there was no polling station at all, no cards had been issued, no transport was available to observe elsewhere, and the woreda was reported to be roughly half under government control and half under armed groups. In Debre Markos town, all movement had been stopped for security reasons from 3:00 p.m. on the day before the election, leaving an observer unable to reach any station at all.

More often the gunfire came and went, and the election flickered with it. In Wegera Woreda of the Central Gondar Zone, voting in Ambagiorgis town's kebeles 01 and 02 began at 6:00 a.m. and was interrupted from about 11:10 a.m. by gunfire near the stations; at the kebele 01 station, voting resumed despite fire from all directions. At station 0317505081505 in the same woreda an exchange of gunfire interrupted the process between 10:00 p.m. and midnight, and at the Aba Giorgis Zuria station (317505080501) heavy fire very close to the station halted voting between roughly 10:00 a.m. and noon. Three further Wegera stations told the same story: station 317505081504 was interrupted at about noon and resumed twenty minutes later, gunfire broke out at station 317605082401 at about 11:00 a.m., and at the kebele 01 (1Le) station fighting stopped the vote at about 10:00 a.m. and kept it stopped until about 4:00 p.m.

In Gazo Woreda of the North Wollo Zone, one Meket station lost about 40 minutes from around 7:00 a.m. to an exchange of fire between the Defense Force and some four kilometres away, and another lost the period from about 6:30 to 7:10 a.m. to heavy gunfire toward the town before voting settled back to normal. South Gondar's stations spent the day between panic and resumption. In Farta Woreda, gunfire between government and armed group interrupted station 0310718140216 shortly after the observer arrived, close-range fire caused severe panic among voters and officials at the Zima School (310920142302) and Silassie (310718140301) stations, voting paused at the Gasagn stations between roughly 9:30 and 10:00 a.m., fear gripped the 03 Tsifet Bet station (310718140203) when firing came down from the nearby Eyesus Mountain at

about 10:00 a.m., and station 310920142702 stood interrupted from about 8:30 a.m. until noon. In Fogera Woreda, the Woreta town station (0311116140402) had begun work when gunfire broke out nearby; the officials closed the station and left, and as the firing worsened around 10:00 a.m. the election there was cut short. At Woreta kebele 04 (311116140403), gunfire around the town began at about 10:20 a.m., and by 11:30 the election had halted, not to reopen.

In Guna Woreda, an exchange of fire between the armed group active in the area and government forces drove the observers from the Arga kebele 2Ha station (0310819140431) at about 10:00 a.m., and they could not return. At Kimir Dingay (310819140102), close-range gunfire scattered the voter queue and threw the officials into severe panic; voting stopped at about 10:00 and resumed at about 11:30. At Behamer Wuha (310819140103), voting was halted from about 9:00 to 11:30 a.m., and very few voters found the courage to return. Andabet Woreda recorded the same rhythm: weapons fire at 11:50 p.m. sent the officials of the Welehi area station home, the Welesh Ha station (0310513140704) lost the morning to gunfire and resumed at about 1:00 p.m., and around the Mesiwejo station (30513140802) gunfire and intimidation made it difficult for voters to come at all. At the Este 3 Welesh station (0310613140902), after firing that lasted until about 10:00 a.m., the officials moved the ballot box and materials to the Fisseha Technical and Vocational compound, and observers were barred from entering. Nearby, voting at station 310513140708 was interrupted from about 6:00 to 8:30 a.m. and resumed at 11:30, while heavy gunfire from about 7:00 a.m. drove voters and the observer from station 310513140705 for most of the day.

Debre Tabor town heard the fighting at closer range. Officials closed the kebele 4 stations and left during an exchange of gunfire, one station reopening at about 9:00 a.m. At the Enatitu Mariam station (0310718140107), voting had begun at 6:20 a.m.; when firing started at about 8:35 the staff loaded the materials and left for the sub-city. At the Hamus Gebeya No. 1 station (310718140104), heavy fire from about 9:00 a.m., amid reports that an armed group had entered the town, halted the process until about 11:30, the officials moving the materials toward the town center before returning. At the Arada station (0310718140403), heavy gunfire about one and a half kilometres away kept all but the nearest residents from voting until it subsided after 9:00 a.m., and at the Harta 1 Water Service Le station (310718140214), loud weapons fire from the edge of town caused great fear through the afternoon although voting was never formally halted.

In Jawi Woreda of the Awi Zone, the stations could not open until about 9:00 a.m. The Chereka station (0318008111201) started on time, but from about 9:00 armed men opened fire and the station dispersed. At the Yechereka Le station (318008111602), heavy-weapons fire, with armed government forces moving through the town with tanks, confined the election to roughly the hours between 9:00 and noon. Heavy fire interrupted the Fendika 01 Ha station from about 11:00 a.m. until voting stopped at about 1:00 p.m., and the Feleke 02 station managed only until about 2:00 p.m., halting at 2:40. Elsewhere in the region the day ended early or under guard: gunfire and fear stopped voting at about 5:00 p.m. at Shewarobit kebele 01 (0315714060601), whose ballot box was later sealed and taken uncounted to the city administration; the Mitara station in

Debank town closed at about 5:30 p.m. owing to unrest; the count in Adiarkay Woreda (0307903081204) was moved to the kebele hall for security; and at Gazig Gibla Ha 2 in Dehana Woreda, Wag Hemra (308707120602), heavy-weapons fire about six kilometres away interrupted voting twice, for half an hour or more each time. At the Libanos station in Este Woreda (0310406143101), the firing began at about 6:30 p.m. and continued intermittently until 10:00 at night.

The eastern zones closed the day the same way. At the kebele 01 Ha station in Goncha Siso Enese Woreda, East Gojjam (311620030101), the officials heard gunfire and, fearing for their lives, closed at 5:20 p.m. to finish the count early, and at kebele 01 of Awabel Woreda (313610030402) public-safety concerns forced closure at about 5:30. The Deribo Kemkem Derita station in Addis Zemen Woreda (03128011431020) paused for about an hour of distant heavy fire in mid-morning, and at the Addis Alem station in Libokemkem Woreda, intensifying gunfire at about 11:00 a.m. forced everyone out until it stopped. In the South Wollo Zone, an exchange of gunfire interrupted the Nono Gomata 1 station in Borena Woreda (0308405130401) at about 8:00 a.m. and delayed its count to 4:00 p.m.; heavy artillery fire halted the count at the Mekane Selam 1 Le station (308405130202) at about 9:30 p.m., to be completed the next morning; armed non-government forces in civilian clothes entered the Debresina station in Wegde Woreda (0308521130203) at about 10:00 a.m. and fired into the air; approaching gunfire at about 10:15 a.m. caused panic at Kutaber kebele 01 (0313016130102); and at the Hayk kebele station in Tehuledere Woreda (316802130104), the count was interrupted at about 7:00 p.m. when everyone was ordered out of the station for security reasons. At the Abaso Ha station in Dessie Zuria Woreda (306023130303), heavy-weapons fire about 1,500 metres away at 4:00 p.m. rippled panic through the queue without stopping the vote; unrest at about 6:00 p.m. forced the observer at the Alanshiya station in Kutaber Woreda (313016132003) to fall back to the woreda center; and at the Wuha Betaso station in Mekane Selam kebele 8 (308408133301), the count that began at midnight was abandoned at the sound of gunshots, the officials leaving with the box, being instructed to return, and finishing between 4:00 and 10:00 the next morning. In Zigem Woreda of the Awi Zone, the Gimir and Waksat station (315105111301) closed at 5:26 p.m. for security, its results posted only the following day, and in Bahir Dar City one observer could not observe at all because fighting broke out at her assigned station in Atse Tewodros Woreda, while another never reached her station in Dagmawi Minilik Woreda because the road was closed.

Oromia's disruptions were fewer but of the same species. Word that the armed group active in the area was moving through a neighboring kebele emptied the Sachi station in Alge Sachi Woreda, Ilu Aba Bora Zone (0431301181101) until about 9:50 a.m. Gunfire between the Defense Forces and non state armed group in neighboring Fati Woreda closed two stations in Meko Woreda, Buno Bedele (0431301701001 and 0431301182302) for about an hour from 8:30 a.m., and the Makka station in the same woreda (433903271106) lost about 30 minutes to firing in the surrounding area. In the rural kebeles of Nunu Kumba Woreda, East Wollega, heavy gunfire from morning until about 6:00 p.m. kept the observers in their homes; the polling stations

themselves were moved from the countryside into the woreda town, and all five observers assigned to the rural areas were unable to observe at all. In Bulluq town of Horo Gudru Wollega, heavy gunfire from dawn made the stations unreachable, an observer en route was forced back home, and the election was not held. At kebele 02 of Homa Woreda, West Wollega (426602690302), unrest around the station swallowed the first hour of the day. Security fears closed the Gedeb Hasasa station (426216650106) at about 5:30 p.m. and interrupted voting at the Gobesa primary school station in Shirka Woreda (0434214093403), and in Odo Shakiso Woreda of the Guji Zone (0429611251001) the security situation delayed the public announcement of results until the morning after the election. The zone's least martial disruption belongs at the end of the list: at the Jemal Yoyi station in Maya, East Hararge (428004340102), it was a quarrel between the queue controllers and the voters that stopped the voting, for about 30 minutes.

5.4.11.13. Interruption of Voting for Other Reasons

Heavy rain suspended voting at the Senkele Farsi Tedros 1 station in Ambo Woreda, West Shewa (0420202080101) at about 3:00 p.m. and at the Desu Lefa Geda station in Omo Beyam Woreda, Jimma Zone (433012291202) at about 10:00 a.m., resuming in both places as soon as the rain stopped, and in Chilga Woreda of Central Gondar (307214020202), rain mixed with hail and wind paused voting for 20 minutes at about 4:00 p.m. Some were administrative improvisations. At the Entoto Fana station in Gulele Woreda 14, Addis Ababa, voting stopped twice, once for about 15 minutes to split the register in two and speed the enormous queue, and again at noon when the officials were told to send a report; at the Yeka Woreda 9 station (1453914100112), voting paused for some 40 minutes while an official a text message he had received. Others were human: quarrels over queue order suspended voting for about 10 minutes at the Merkato station in Decha Woreda, Kaffa Zone (1141506000202), and for 40 to 50 minutes at the Gimbo Ber station in Gesha Woreda (1140609040203) until special forces called by the officials restored order; a queue conflict at the Tulema Tama station in Loma Bosa, Dawro Zone (1146401061301) troubled the first half-hour of the day until police calmed the voters, and quarrels among queued voters near the Catholic church in Damot Gale Woreda, Wolaita (941912070507) stopped voting twice in the evening until the local police commander restored peace. At the Etan Megazen station in Debark town (307907080405), a 15-minute standoff between media personnel filming too close and the officials ended when the crew complied.

Two interruptions deserve their own account. At the Ayna Eyesus station in Bugna Woreda, North Wollo (0306710070902), the count was interrupted for fatigue, but the observers' fuller record was darker: registered voters who arrived before 6:00 p.m. were turned away with "we have finished," after which the officials themselves cast ballots, according to the register, for the very voters they had turned away, and officials at the station were also seen advising voters to vote for one party. And at the Fikir Andinet Communal station in Addis Ketema Woreda 12 (1453803040111), officials who said they were cold carried the ballot box to an adjacent building after voting ended, conducted the count there, and left with the box by car when they had finished.

The national extension of voting hours produced its own tangles. At station 744914200302 in the Silte Zone, the officials had already opened a box and begun counting when the extension was announced; they finished counting that box, re-sealed it, resumed voting, and counted again afterwards. In Dire Dawa, at station 1554601010207, the same news arrived mid-count, the count was abandoned, the station reopened, and counting restarted only at about midnight. More prosaically, the officials of station 850910040902 in Gorche Woreda, Northern Sidama closed their polling station between 10:00 and 10:30 a.m. in order to eat, and at the Yadeta Suniti station in Saylem Woreda, Kaffa Zone (1146801041201), party agents interfered with the chairperson's explanation of procedures to voters until the problem was resolved.

5.4.11.14. Early Closure of Polling Stations

A few polling stations closed prior to the legally mandated closing time of 6:00 p.m. In Mekdela Woreda of the South Wollo Zone, station 314104130205 closed at 5:40 p.m. on the reasoning that all of its roughly 700 voters had voted, and the count was then completed within a single hour, remarkably fast compared with other stations and of limited credibility; at the nearby Wefcha station (314104130102), voting stopped at 4:00 p.m. on the ground that all 752 registrants had voted. At the Gebeya Meda station in Wegde Woreda (308521130204), the officials decided the station “must close” at 4:30 p.m. even as voters were still trickling in; Defense Force troops and a military vehicle subsequently removed the ballot box, and the observer never learned where the count took place. In Damot Gale Woreda of the Wolaita Zone (0941912070514), the sequence ran in reverse: officials went house to house telling registered voters to come and vote precisely so that the station could close before 6:00 p.m., and it closed at 5:20. At the Enatitu Mariam station in Debre Tabor town (310718140107), the station closed at 5:20 p.m. on the reasoning that no one remained in the queue and every voter had come. And at the Kiyla Girare rental-house station in South Sodo Woreda, East Gurage Zone (747907200802), the officials closed at 6:00 p.m. despite the national extension of voting hours, reopening at 6:30 p.m. only after discussion with CECOE's observer.

5.4.11.15. Observers Denied Entry to Polling Stations

In Addis Ababa City Administration, at the Sebatenya health facility station in Addis Ketema Woreda 1, an observer with a disability was made to observe without an assistant on the ground that the assistant had no badge. In Addis Ketema Woreda 9, a mobile observer was expelled from the FFEE 03 station after constituency coordinators told officials that mobile observers were not permitted. In Yeka Woreda 1 (1452701100109), an observer was made to leave her fifth station because she carried CECOE's election bag and observation documents, which officials claimed contained campaign content.

In the Amhara region, at the Weldiya Gudina station, the observer was not allowed in despite showing identification and explaining his mission. Similarly, in South Wollo Zone, Kalu Woreda, at the Adame Ha 1 station, the observer was told he could not observe

without a kebele ID (although he presented a photo workplace ID together with CECOE's observation badge) and was denied entry; he later observed at another station. In South Gondar Zone, Guna Bage Midir Woreda, Kimir Dingay town, in addition to the Arga station being established in a military camp, CECOE's observer was not permitted to enter and observe riot-control personnel around the camp turned the observer away a day in advance. In Dessie City Administration, mobile observers across the city were told by security personnel that once inside a station they could not leave and re-enter, effectively confining them to a single station; at the Agergizat and Etege Menen stations in Hote Woreda, one observer was refused entry to her second station and another was prevented from leaving it. In East Gojjam, Debre Markos, a station was under Defense Force control and could not be observed; the observer withheld the station number out of concern for their safety.

In the Oromia region, Ilu Aba Bora Zone, Alge Sachi Woreda (station 422111281401), the observer arrived on time but was denied entry by the election official; at the same woreda's Alge station, the observer was admitted briefly and then made to leave without being allowed to remain and observe. In West Arsi Zone, Dodola Woreda, Yerero 2 station, the official refused entry saying "I was not informed by the woreda election board," and at the Koji school station in Fecho Woreda officials refused observation saying no one had notified them in advance. In Arsi Zone, Gololcha Woreda, Welda Gudina station (422526090102), the observer was refused entry citing a doubtful security threat, despite showing an observer badge. In Bishoftu, at the Genesis station (418702130307), the observer who had opened the station in the morning was turned away at counting time in the evening. In East Hararge, a mobile observer was refused the station code by officials at the Bulkisa Megala Orobitsu station. Most gravely, in Ilu Aba Bora Zone, at the Yami station in Becho Woreda (427305281401) and the Bikiltu Gula station in Gachi Woreda (427305280801), the assigned observers were taken from their homes and detained overnight by a government body the evening before the election, released at noon on election day, and then barred by police from entering and forced to rotate among five stations.

In the Central Ethiopia region, Hadiya Zone, Duna Woreda, at the Chafimera rental-house station (0748215020104), the observer was denied entry on the ground that her badge did not specify the observation location; at the First Otoro Hafule school station (748215020102), the observer was likewise denied entry.

In the Sidama region, Northern Sidama Zone, Gorche Woreda, at the Murero station (0850910040802), officials attempted to bar the observer, disrupting voting for several minutes until a security officer intervened; in Shebedino Woreda, an observer was initially refused and admitted only after some time. At the Farmers Training Center station in Derara

Woreda (0850207020603), observers were repeatedly warned off and finally expelled at about 11:00 p.m., before the count.

In the SNNP region, Gamo Zone, Kamba Woreda, at the Soke Health Post station, the observer was denied entry for not carrying an observer ID.

In the Southwest Ethiopia region, Kaffa Zone, Gimbo Woreda, at the Ufa station (1143413101603), observers were told they could observe only if they surrendered their phones, and did so.

In the Oromia region, at kebele 01 of Ganji Woreda, West Wollega (0436219691802), CECOE's observer arrived at about 5:20 a.m. but was refused entry with the words “that is enough for now; we will call you if needed,” despite presenting the required credentials, and returned home. In the Amhara region, at the Majetel station in Legahida Woreda, South Wollo (317301130202), the observer was denied entry on arrival and admitted only after a wait.

5.4.11.16. Threats, Intimidation, and Harassment of Observers

Those who watched the process were themselves watched, and sometimes worse. The day began violently for an observer of the Freedom and Equality Party in Damot Sore Woreda, Wolaita Zone (0944401100101), who was beaten at about 5:30 a.m., on his way to observe, by a security officer identified as Major Tesfaye Odele. In Ofa Woreda of the same zone (0947325200104), CECOE's observer was threatened first by the constituency coordinator and then, for remaining at the station after the Board extended voting hours, by neighborhood youths; only the presence of security personnel prevented physical harm. The most dangerous moment came in Sarmale Woreda of the Kore (Amaro) Zone (0939701051202), during the count, when it emerged that EZEMA was leading: two Prosperity Party observers went outside to a security squad leader, urged him to open fire, and attempted to seize his rifle when he refused, while a policeman slept in a room of the polling station.

The pressure did not end with polling day. On the day after the election, three Prosperity Party representatives cornered CECOE's observer at the Fikir Andinet Communal station in Addis Ketema Woreda 12 (1453803040111), demanding “why are you neutral? Vote!” and telling her she would face legal consequences if she did not. In Bahir Dar City, at the Eshet Park sub-station in kebele 14, the election official admitted CECOE's mobile observer, but the ruling party representative barred her from the station without giving any reason. In the Silte Zone (744909200503), when a Freedom Party candidate, Fuad Hayredin, attempted to enter the station in the morning, the station head shoved him out. And at the Chefe Sebiro primary school in Robe Woreda, Arsi Zone, the station head snatched CECOE observer's checklist at about 9:00 a.m. with the words “you are not needed here”; the dispute that followed among the officials themselves interrupted the process for some 30 minutes.

5.4.11.17. Sexual Harassment

One incident of sexual harassment was recorded, and it was directed at the election administration itself. At the 6Le1 station in Atse Tewodros Woreda, Bahir Dar City (0306301100125), observers saw voters harassing the female election official serving as the searcher at the entrance, with intimidation reported at the search point at about 8:30 a.m. The incident stands for more than itself: the entrance search is the one point in the station that every voter must pass, it is staffed predominantly by women, and a woman who cannot perform it without harassment is being driven out of precisely the role the gender-balance requirement was designed to guarantee.

5.4.11.18. Interference with the Vote Count, Removal of Ballot Boxes, and Failure to Post Results

5.4.11.18.1. Removal of Ballot Boxes Without Counting at the Station

The law is explicit that votes are counted where they are cast, in front of whoever is present to watch. The most consequential incidents of the entire election-day record are therefore the ballot boxes that left their stations sealed and uncounted. In Oromia, voting at the Stadium station in Negele Arsi town (0420609650601) ran to 5:30 p.m.; no count followed, and at about 7:30 p.m. police and the kebele administration loaded the box onto a vehicle for counting at the woreda, where the count finally took place the next morning, at a police station. In Robe Woreda, the boxes of the Doyo Gora (433209092702) and Addis Ketema (433209090803) stations were taken to the woreda administration and counted only the following day, and at Doyo Gora no results had been posted even a day later. At the Welde Guday station, the materials and the box were driven away the moment voting ended, with no count, no posted results, and no answer as to when counting would occur. At the Biftu station in Qilxuu Dammaa kebele (420609650106), no count was conducted at the station; at the Diloo Qabsoo station in Shashamane Woreda (434104651301), the count took place only after the ballots were moved to a nearby station on security grounds; and at the Bu'uura Boru school station in Meta Robi Woreda, West Shewa (431703680502), the officials cited local security problems and took the votes to another woreda entirely.

In Mojana Wedera Woreda of the North Shewa Zone, the boxes of station 0308312061502 and the Sela Dingay station were carried to the Mojana Wedera government office for counting between 5:30 and 6:00 p.m. In Shewarobit town (0315714060601), the sealed box went uncounted to the city administration and the count was never openly observed, and at the Werenchete station in Ensaro Woreda the officials took the box to the town administration “for safekeeping,” the observer never seeing the count. The starkest scene played out at the three Debresina stations in Wegde Woreda (0308521130201, -02, -03), which closed at about 4:35 p.m.: the officials sealed the boxes and took them away, saying the count would happen elsewhere, “where the soldiers are.” Observers who asked to accompany the boxes were told, “we are not counting today, go home.” The officials' phones went unanswered thereafter, and the

observers later heard that all the woreda's votes had been counted where the Defense Force was encamped. At the Abado kebele 02 station in the same woreda (308521130301), gunfire closed the station at 4:00 p.m. and the box was taken away uncounted, the observer never learning where. In Kutaber Woreda, the officials of the Kistane station (313016131502) left with the box at about 5:00 p.m. for an unknown destination and never returned, and at the Kistani Le station (331306131503), heavy gunfire after voting ended drove the officials to take the materials to Kutaber town, where the count was held in a government hall; CECOE's observer, though invited to accompany them, did not observe it.

At the Majete station in Antsokiya-and-Gemza Woreda, counting had begun at 6:15 p.m. when the officials were summoned by telephone to “the center” and left without finishing; the observer, fearing there would be no transport back, did not follow. At the Ha1 station in Nigist Eleni kebele, Debre Berhan town (03080260205), the officials announced that counting was centralized and carried the box away. At the Mebrat Hail area station in Mida Woremo Woreda (0314208060202), the votes were counted only after relocation to the administration office, on security grounds, and at the Zone 4 station in Adiarkay Woreda, North Gondar (307903081205), the count moved after 6:00 p.m. to a nearby hall and ran to 11:00 at night. At kebele 03 of Fogera Woreda (0311116140402), after voting was halted at about 10:00 a.m. for security reasons, the box was moved to a private residence; no count was held at the station, and the observer could neither follow the box nor learn where the count took place. At the Kurkur Seyo Le station in Dessie Zuria Woreda, zone coordinators collected all the election materials at about 9:00 p.m., citing a security problem, and took them to the Bonba sub-city polling station. One removal was forced by the fighting itself and handled with unusual care: at the Nono Gomata 2 station in Borena Woreda (308405130402), the count was abandoned at roughly its halfway point when gunfire approached, and the officials, the box, and the observers moved together, first to Nono Gomata 1 and then to the town administration, where the sealed box spent the night; the count was completed from 4:00 a.m. and the results posted at about 11:10.

Nor was the practice confined to the north. In the Somali region, at kebele 02 of Danan Woreda, Shabelle Zone (0537603060102), an election board member announced after voting that the votes would be counted outside the polling station, told CECOE's observer they were no longer needed, and had the boxes taken elsewhere. In the Afar region, at the Almaha station in Elidar Woreda (2044071101207), the observer was ordered out just as the count was to begin, with the words “we are not counting now; we are handing the box to the police,” and was absent for the entire count. And in Andabet Woreda of the South Gondar Zone, the Este 3 Welesh station (310613140902) had relocated to a military camp at about 6:00 a.m., after which the observer was refused entry; at about 5:00 p.m. the officials announced that both the voting and the count had been “completely finished.”

5.4.11.18.2. Observers Excluded from Counts and Results Discrepancies

When observers were expelled before the count, the numbers that emerged afterwards could not be checked, and in one case they did not withstand the checking that had already been done. At the Farmers Training Center station in Derara Woreda, Central Sidama (0850207020603), observers who had watched the full voting day counted 930 voters against the 1,493 names on the register. They were expelled before the count began. When the results were posted the next morning, the total number of voters was recorded as 1,493, exactly equal to the register. In Addis Ababa, at station 1452606090105 in Gulele Woreda 6, the station chairperson spent the approach of midnight on repeated telephone calls with unidentified persons, then told the observer, “you are not needed, stay outside”; the count went unobserved. At the Mehal Habicho station in Gombora Woreda, Hadiya Zone (745720020302), a Prosperity Party candidate appeared repeatedly to order that the start of the count be postponed, and the observer was asked to leave before it began. At the Green Area station in Loka Abaya Woreda, Sidama (850701020101), the officials told CECOE's observer they would not count then; party cadres wearing no badges entered at night and conducted the count themselves. And in Bahir Dar City, at the Shimabo No. 2 station in Gion sub-city (006301100513), the officials completed the House of Peoples' Representatives count, stopped before the regional council count was finished, told those present to go home, and posted results for a count no one had been allowed to see through to its end.

5.4.11.18.3. Pressure and Disturbances During Counting

Even where the count stayed at the station, it did not always proceed in peace. The Wondo Genet Woreda of Sidama produced the most elaborate obstruction. At the Mesafint Zeleke and Kale Hiwot stations, the chairperson and the officials around him worked to interrupt their own count, deliberately withdrawing so that it would stop and inserting unvoted papers into the box, while repeated telephone calls and the presence of a Prosperity Party candidate, assuring his superiors that all was well even as observers were pressed to declare the process peaceful, kept the count from ever proceeding cleanly. At the Wirsha Derese Mender station (851608040605), ruling party leaders entered and harassed the official until he suspended the count at midnight “until 9:00 a.m. tomorrow”; their representatives told the opposition's, “go away, eat dinner, we will count,” and when the opposition representatives were later asked to sign that the process had been fair, they refused and left. Elsewhere in Sidama, the ruling party pressured the officials of the Pound station in Borchha Woreda (851707041103) to reopen the concluded voting so that more votes could be cast, a disturbance that pushed the count to the next day, and in Gorche (850910042101), Prosperity Party leaders used their authority to have an individual removed from the station while the count stood interrupted.

In the SNNP region, a Prosperity Party observer at the Laska Donke Idir House station in Basketo Special Zone (0941401020102) demanded the name list of more than 210 registered voters before the count, “so we can phone them and have them vote,” and obstructed its start until about 7:30 p.m.; the chairperson, after consulting the Board, refused to reopen voting once

counting had begun, and the Prosperity observer filed a complaint. At the Moti Tesfa Agriculture Office station (940401020203), EZEMA and Prosperity observers together pressured the official for provisional results declarations until security forces took the declaration away; it was posted the next day. At the Youth Center station in Humbo Woreda, Wolaita (944429070105), where 1,500 were registered but turnout had been low, the party observers present proposed “counting out” 300 ballots and stuffing them themselves, pressing the officials and CECOE's observer to accept; the idea was rejected, after which the count was stalled from midnight to 3:00 a.m. and then deliberately delayed, concluding only on Tuesday at 4:00 p.m.

In Oromia, a Prosperity Party official arrived at the Meskel Square sub-station in Nekemte (432407390109) at about 9:00 p.m., just as the ballots lay spread on the table, and the observers were ordered out on the pretext of a security problem the observer could see did not exist. In the Amhara region, at station 307214020206 in Chilga Woreda, the man designated to serve as a Prosperity coordinator entered the voting-equipment area in violation of the rules, pressured the officials, and subjected them to insults and threats; complaints raised during the count, that officials were consulting party representatives, that unstamped papers were being counted, that the counters were being harassed, received no response. At the Kilaj sub-stations in Zigem Woreda, Awi Zone (including 315105110204), ruling party members arrived at midnight demanding that five additional observers be admitted and threatened that the count should not proceed without them, relenting only when the chairperson stood firm. In Addis Ababa's Nifas Silk Lafto sub-city, a Prosperity Party observer at the Jegol station (1453113050107) argued at length for 85 invalidated ballots to be counted in his favor before the official rejected all the damaged papers, and at the Woreda 12 Idir House station (1453104050117) the same party's observer pressed for invalid ballots to be counted, darkened faint or unstamped marks so they would read clearly, and took part in the count while feigning errors in his party's favor.

Verification added a final set. At the Beder station in Atomolo kebele, Soyama Town Administration, Burji Zone (941102012002), the officials themselves created a commotion and suspended the count, saying they were tired and hungry; it resumed only after police intervened. At the Idget kebele 01 station in Bench Sheko (1147208032702), an argument between the station chairperson and the party agents halted the count for several minutes, and at station 307214020202 in Chilga Woreda a disagreement between the officials and the station heads over counting procedure stopped the regional council count for about a quarter of an hour. At the Limo 02 Shemsa Jemaya station in Shashogo Woreda, Hadiya Zone (746210022902), faint markings on ballot papers were darkened and made clearly visible during the count, and at station 0849904002203 in Aleta Wondo Woreda, Southern Sidama, no attempt was made to separate valid ballots from the invalid, torn, and damaged.

5.4.11.18.4. Counts Postponed and Results Not Posted

After the six-hour extension of voting, many counts simply ran out of night. Stations across the country postponed counting to the following day on grounds of fatigue or darkness. In Addis

Ababa these included the Bole Kalehiwot (1452301060112) and Lideta Akalawi Meredaja Idir Ha (1453401010114) stations, where voting itself had run to midnight; the Birkirkita Condominium station (1454203080105), where a count begun at noon was suspended at 4:00 a.m. and resumed at 7:00; Bole Woreda 01 (1452301060103), where overcrowding pushed the count into the night; Lemi Kura Woreda 01 (1453905090517), where the count moved to 8:00 the next morning and ran until about 8:00 that evening; the Hayat No. 5 Condominium station (1453902060127), where an instruction from above moved the count to the morning; and the Hayat 72 station (1453902060125), where a count begun at about 12:40 a.m. was halted at about 2:00. At Janamora's Mekane Birhan stations in North Gondar, the boxes spent the night at a police station and were counted the next day at a public library. At Bena Tsema in South Omo (0948705081201), the officials stopped an unfinished count at about 2:20 a.m.; at Kochere in Gedeo (0943204111502), exhaustion and the lack of electricity moved the count to the morning; the regional council count at the Chebental No. 1 station in Sidama (0851208010101) was moved to the next day; and at Sherkole in Benishangul-Gumuz (639303000201), the lack of electricity forced relocation to a lit station.

In the Amhara region the postponements clustered in Legahida Woreda, where counting at the Weyn Amba Ha (0317301130101), Majete Ha (317301130201), and Majetel (317301130202) stations was moved to the following day, in the case of Majete Ha because the station guards declared themselves too tired to remain. The boxes spent the night at the police station, and those of Majete and Majetel were counted the next day not at their own stations but at the Weyn Amba primary school. At the Kerker Bale Egziabher No. 2 station in Lay Armachiho (313101022401), a count begun at about 6:30 p.m. was halted at 9:00 for fear that unrest at other precincts would reach the station in the dark, and resumed at about 4:00 a.m. once security was reinforced. In Anded Woreda, East Gojjam (305509030802), the box was kept overnight at the kebele municipal office some 20 metres from the voting site and counted the next day in the presence of all the election observers, and at kebele 04 of Mota Town Administration (314703030408), rain prevented the results being posted after the count, the observers leaving without ever confirming whether they went up.

Then there were the stations where the results were not posted because no one intended to post them. In Libokemkem Woreda of the South Gondar Zone (312701143403), the declaration never appeared on the station door; asked why, the station head replied, "no one will look at it." In Shewarobit town, Kewet Woreda (315715050601), the results were posted at the police station rather than on the station door, for reasons never explained. In Bahir Dar, station 2 Le1Ha (036301101706) posted its results only around noon the next day, and results appeared at the Belay Zeleke 17 He station (306301100711) in the morning although neither voting nor counting had been open to observation the previous evening. Most bluntly, at the Idget station in Bench Sheko, Southwest Ethiopia (1147208032702), the officials refused to post results at all, telling observers and party agents that "results are announced at the national level."

The remaining cases complete the map. In Oromia, the count at the Mekranje Temama station in Robe Woreda (433209090302) took place only two days after the election owing to the security situation, its results posted after two days, and at the Megala Idir House station in Feyo kebele, East Shewa (431102360103), no results whatever were posted between about 3:00 and 8:00 a.m. while CECOE's observer remained present. In the SNNP region, the count at the Fisseha Genet Sefere Selam station in Kochere Woreda (943204111501) began only at about 3:00 a.m. and, with the officials citing tiredness and hunger, lasted until about 5:00, the declaration going up the next day at about 1:00 p.m. In Sidama, no copy of the reconciliation form was posted at all at the Mesafint Zeleke rental-house station in Tula Woreda (851206011111), and the results of station 0849904002203 in Aleta Wondo Woreda were never clearly announced to the public. In the Southwest Ethiopia region, the officials of the Addis Ketema kebele No. 1 School station in Mizan Aman City Administration counted until 9:00 p.m., suspended for fatigue, and finished the next morning; at the Selam Kindergarten station in the Mizan Teferi constituency (1147201200402), voting lasted until 8:00 p.m. and the officials agreed, and signed, to move the count to the morning. And at the Girnu station in Meinit Shasha Woreda, West Omo (1146601201102), the election had been conducted in two separate groups, a “special” group for permanent residents and a “regular” group for temporary ones, and for the “special” voters no copy of the results declaration and reconciliation was ever posted.

5.4.11.19. Handling of Complaints

The complaint form is the thread that connects a voter's grievance on election day to the adjudication process described in Section 5.3.5, and at several stations the thread was cut at its source. At the Bekasha station in Karat Zuria Woreda, Konso Zone (0944401100101), an opposition party representative asked the election official for a complaint form; she refused, and his complaint was never submitted. At the Bole Clinic sub-station in Mandura Woreda, Benishangul-Gumuz (639261080103), complaints were received only orally, nothing was registered in writing, and even those who came with complaints were not given forms to complete. Section 5.3.5 records that the Board dismissed complaint after complaint for want of a contemporaneous written record; these stations show one reason such records did not exist.

Where the mechanism was allowed to work, it worked. At the Fendika kebele Le station in Debre Markos town (0312021030902), a voter who had lost her card was initially turned away by the card officer on his own authority; she complained, the election official checked her ID, and she voted. In Chena Woreda of the Kaffa Zone (1148908300102), voters complained that elderly, disabled, and illiterate voters were not being assisted, and the complaint was observed to have been resolved after a time. The remaining disputes were between the watchers themselves: at the Turga health center station in Sawla Town Administration, Gofa Zone, an EZEMA representative complained that the station head kept no minutes when opening the station at about 5:30 a.m., and at the Shinati Ino station in Telo Woreda, Kaffa Zone (1143115101403), the Prosperity Party representative complained that the EZEMA representative was taking

photographs improperly, while the EZEMA representative in turn complained repeatedly about the improper assistance being given to voters.

5.4.11.20. Multiple Critical Incidents Observed at a Single Polling Station

Almost every category of violation documented in this chapter converged on a single station: Dunfeta Feyta, in Kore Woreda of the West Arsi Zone, Oromia (042905651101). The station itself was established inside a police camp. When CECOE's observer arrived at about 5:30 a.m., voting had reportedly already begun, before the official opening hour. The kebele chairperson was seen campaigning for the Prosperity Party near the station at dawn, and later he and the woreda chairperson entered the station itself and gave directions to the election officials and to voters.

What happened inside defies brief description, and the observer's account is therefore given in full. Six election officials and two ruling party members received arriving voters' cards, sent the voters back without voting, and themselves signed, marked, and cast the ballots for the ruling party. When voters were finally allowed to vote from about 9:00 a.m., officials followed them in, violating the secrecy of the ballot; while more than 50 voters cast ballots, political representatives and officials went in with them, saying "mark here," and watched whom they chose. Two unauthorized Prosperity Party representatives were seen entering, and the police, far from keeping order, not only entered without permission but were themselves stamping ballots and inserting them into the box. Because three polling stations were voting in one place, a commotion arose, and security personnel were seen snatching the cards of queued voters and driving them away; voters were observed having their cards taken and their fingers inked without ever being permitted to vote, being whipped, and being driven from the station. The station's officials were entirely male, including those conducting body searches of women, and two Prosperity Party representatives coerced voters whether or not they needed assistance. At 10:00 a.m. the voting process was declared concluded and the ballot box was taken away uncounted, on the claim that counting would be done at Kore Woreda. Voting did not resume.

No single station in CECOE's record combined so many violations: a prohibited location, premature opening, campaigning by officeholders, exclusion of voters, ballots cast by officials and police, violated secrecy, coerced assistance, an all-male staff searching women, violence against queued voters, and a ballot box removed uncounted. CECOE has reported the station to the National Election Board of Ethiopia by its code and considers what happened at Dunfeta Feyta the clearest single illustration in this report of how completely an election can fail at one station even while proceeding correctly at thousands of others.

CHAPTER 6: COMPLIANCE WITH ELECTORAL INTEGRITY STANDARDS

This chapter assesses the Seventh General Election against five standards of electoral integrity: transparency, inclusiveness, participation, fairness, and accountability. The assessment draws together the full record of this report: the political and security context, the legal framework analyzed, and the pre-election, election-day, and post-election findings and critical incidents.

6.1. Transparency

Disclosure of the Board Appointment Process: In the appointment of the Board's own leadership, the establishment of the nomination committees, the nomination windows, and the shortlists of nominees were publicly announced, and the 2025 round introduced a multi-channel public call that attracted more than 1,000 nominations (Section 5.1.1). CECOIE views the multi-channel call for nominations as a deliberate effort to broaden the candidate pool for Board members, making it the most transparent stage of the appointment process.

Non-disclosure of the Board Selection Criteria: In the 2025 appointment of Board members, the criteria and procedures by which 168 candidates were reduced to 12, and then to 6, were never published (Section 5.1.1). In the 2023 chairperson appointment, the screening and shortlisting stages proceeded without progress updates and without publication of nominees' names and profiles (Section 5.1.1) CECOIE assesses that the openness of the call and the opacity of the selection are of unequal weight. It is the selection stage, where the public record remains completely silent, that ultimately determines the composition of the Board.

Publication of Polling Station Data: The Board's publication practice at the operational level was an advance from the previous electoral cycles. It made the full list of planned polling stations available to stakeholders as a spreadsheet, in which every one of the 52,751-planned polling stations carried a standardized 13-digit code, so that stations could be identified and cross-referenced consistently by parties, observers and the Board itself. Of those stations, 35,681, or roughly two-thirds, also carried GPS coordinates, which improves the auditability of the network and lays a foundation for the geographic information systems that boundary revision will eventually require (Section 5.1.3). CECOIE assesses the coded and geolocated station list as the most useful operational disclosure of the cycle for observers and party agents, because it made independent verification of the network possible.

Publication of Electoral Lists: The Board published region-by-region lists of the 16,782 technology-enabled stations, the full polling station list on 28 January 2026, and the final candidate list on 23 February 2026 (Sections 5.1.3 and 5.1.4). It circulated election-official lists to political parties for comment in two rounds, a confidence-building mechanism (Section 2.3). CECOIE assesses these as procedural improvements that were delivered as described, and notes that each of them concerns the announcement of an outcome rather than the justification of a decision.

Digitalization of the Accreditation Workflow: Accreditation of observer organizations was moved from a paper to a digital workflow following the demonstration of 4 and 5 November 2025 (Section 5.1.6). CECOIE assesses the change as an administrative improvement whose transparency value lies in the record it generates, and records that the Board has not published aggregate data from that workflow, so that the accreditation process remains visible to applicants and not to the public.

Transparency of Candidate Registration: The Board published the final candidate list on 23 February 2026 and provided a consolidated candidate registration dataset resolving each of the 10,438 candidates to a contest, region, constituency, party, gender and, where declared, disability status, which is the basis of the analysis in Section 5.1.5 and is a level of disclosure not available in previous cycles. Two limitations qualify that advance. First, disability is recorded only where declared, with no structured non-disclosure option, so that participation by persons with disabilities cannot be measured from the dataset and can only be inferred (Section 5.1.5). Second, CECOIE's request for access to the back end of the digital candidate registration system, which would have allowed the volume of submissions, rejections and reasons for rejection to be verified independently against the parties' allegations of exclusion, was not granted (Section 5.1.5). Transparency of outcome was therefore achieved at the point of the published list, and transparency of process was not achieved at the point where it was contested.

Transparency of Dispute Resolution: The Board provided CECOIE with its physical register of the 119 complaints submitted on the Seventh General Election, documenting each case, the reasoning applied, and the disposition, including findings that its own officials had committed criminal conduct (Section 5.3.5.5). The decisions display a consistent analytical structure, addressing each head of relief separately (Section 5.3.5.5). CECOIE considers the establishment of this register to be among the most significant institutional advances of the electoral cycle. It records, however, that the register was provided to CECOIE on request rather than published, so that it forms part of the Board's disclosure to accredited observers and not of the public record. The distinction matters, because the accountability value of a reasoned register lies in its being available to the complainants and the electorates whose cases it decides.

Publication of the Electoral Calendar: Against that achievement stands the date of publication. The calendar was officially announced only on 9 December 2025, less than six months before polling day, so that activities running from 23 February 2025, including the organization of constituency offices, the accreditation of voter-education organizations completed on 25 October 2025, the recruitment of election officers opened on 27 October 2025, and the opening of party pre-registration on 17 November 2025, were conducted before any calendar had been published (Section 5.1.4). CECOIE assesses this as a shortfall at the front of the cycle, because stakeholders committed resources against dates communicated piecemeal rather than against a published

schedule. The Board planned well and published late, and the two findings are recorded here together rather than allowed to cancel one another.¹⁴⁴

Execution of the Electoral Calendar: NEBE produced a calendar covering the full electoral cycle and sequencing more than thirty discrete milestones, and it executed the major milestones in their planned order, holding polling on the originally announced date. This is an improvement on the Sixth General Election, whose calendar was voided by postponement, amended mid-course, and ultimately split polling across three dates (Section 5.1.4). CECOE assesses the execution of the calendar as one of the administrative achievements of the cycle, among others recorded in this chapter, because predictability of dates is the condition on which parties, observers and voters plan their own participation.

Transparency of Delimitation Decisions: The criteria by which the House of Federation determines which minority nationalities receive special constituencies have never been published at all (Section 5.1.2). CECOE assesses this as the most complete non-disclosure recorded in this chapter, since it concerns not the reasoning behind a particular decision but the standard against which every such decision is taken, and it lies with a body outside the Board's control.

Transparency at the Count: At the vast majority of polling stations, vote counting proceeded strictly in accordance with established procedures; however, at 2 % of observed stations the count was not conducted at the station where the votes were cast (Section 5.2.4). The incident records ballot boxes removed and counted at woreda offices, police stations, government halls, private residences, and military encampments, in several cases without any observer present and in one case with officials telling observers to go home before becoming unreachable (Section 5.4.11.18.1). Observers were expelled before counts began (Section 5.4.11.18.2), and at the Farmers Training Center station in Derara Woreda observers who had counted 930 voters through the day were expelled before the count and saw the posted result record 1,493 voters, a figure exactly equal to the register (Section 5.4.11.18.2). Results were posted at a police station rather than on the polling station door, posted only the following day, or refused outright on the ground that results are announced at the national level (Section 5.4.11.18.4). CECOE assesses these as the most serious transparency findings in this report, notwithstanding that they occurred at a small minority of stations and against a baseline in which 97 % of observed stations posted their results correctly (Section 5.2.5). The reason is that a count conducted out of sight is not capable of reconstruction afterwards. Every other transparency shortfall recorded in this chapter can in principle be cured by later disclosure, whereas an unwitnessed count leaves no record

¹⁴⁴ The Board's internal planning documents indicate that the activities conducted between 23 February 2025 and 9 December 2025, including the organization of constituency and election offices, the accreditation of voter-education organizations on 25 October 2025, the opening of election-officer recruitment on 27 October 2025, and the opening of party pre-registration on 17 November 2025, were carried out in line with the calendar the Board had adopted internally. The finding recorded here concerns the date on which that calendar was made public, not the sequencing of the activities themselves.

against which the declared figure can be tested, and the remedy the Board applies in such cases, annulling the station's result, removes the doubt only by removing the votes (Section 5.3.5.5).

Media Accreditation and Access to the Process: The Board opened the electoral process to media scrutiny on a substantial scale. Following a public call issued on 12 January 2026, it accredited more than 1,100 journalists from 37 media institutions to cover the process (Section 5.1.6), and it opened state media to the campaign through the free-airtime allocation and the election programming assessed at Section 6.4 (Section 5.1.7). CECOE assesses the scale of accreditation and the volume of election programming as real openings, and as an advance on the media access afforded in previous cycles.

Constraints on the Information Environment: Against that opening, the environment through which transparency operates was itself constrained. Media accreditation was conditioned on a signed oath that journalists and rights organizations argued was broad enough to restrict legitimate reporting, and some accreditation revocations were documented (Section 5.1.6). Over the pre-election year the Ethiopian Media Authority suspended nine Deutsche Welle Amharic correspondents, banned Wazema Radio, cancelled the registration of Addis Standard, and declined to renew the accreditation of three Reuters journalists while revoking the agency's African Union Summit accreditation (Section 5.1.8). In June 2026 the federal government expelled a French journalist after revoking her press accreditation and residence permit (Section 5.1.8). These measures followed the April 2025 amendments that transferred licensing and sanctioning powers from the Ethiopian Media Authority's board to the Authority itself (Section 3.2). CECOE assesses that access was granted on a scale not previously seen and was held on terms the regulator could withdraw, so that the breadth of the accreditation and the conditionality of it are two aspects of the same finding.

Overall Assessment of Transparency: CECOE assesses that transparency of outcome was substantially achieved across the cycle, and that the shortfall lies in a minority of decisions, all of them consequential ones: the reduction of 168 board-member candidates to 12 and then to 6, the allocation of special constituencies to minority nationalities, and the treatment of consultation submissions on the amended electoral law. In each of these the outcome was announced and the reasoning was not. CECOE regards the explanation of reasoning as the more consequential of the two for institutional trust, because it is what allows a losing party to accept a decision as fairly reached. Two findings in this section stand outside that pattern and are recorded separately. At the count, transparency did not lag behind the outcome but failed altogether at a minority of stations, and that failure is not curable by later disclosure. And in the information environment the constraint was not on the Board's disclosure at all but on the independence of those reporting it.

6.2. Inclusiveness

Inclusion by Legal and Administrative Design: The framework governing the 7th General Elections was more inclusive by design than 6th General Elections. Proclamation No. 1394/2025 determined age eligibility by reference to polling day, so that citizens turning 18 by 1 June 2026 could register and those turning 21 could stand, admitting first-time voters and young candidates previously excluded by cut-off dates. It reduced the number of supporting signatures required of women candidates and candidates with disabilities, and converted unpaid to paid leave for civil servants standing for election (Section 3.1). The Board's directive on party support applies an explicitly intersectional formula: the number of women and candidates with disabilities counts toward both annual and election-period funding, and independent candidates receive supplements above the base grant of ETB 200,000 of 25 % for women, 35 % for women with disabilities, and 15 % for candidates with disabilities (Section 3.4). The media allocation formula likewise weights the number of female candidates and candidates with disabilities a party has fielded (Section 3.4). The candidate registration directive obliges NEBE to make the portal accessible to persons with disabilities, and the digital registration directive preserves an assisted modality that accommodates voters whether or not they hold a national ID (Sections 3.4 and 2.5). Special polling stations are provided by law for soldiers in camps, students in higher education, internally displaced persons, and prisoners eligible to vote (Section 5.1.3).

Variations in the Franchise: The principal limitation of the Seventh General Election measured against the standard of inclusiveness was the uneven franchise. Electoral operations were not conducted in 46 constituencies across the Tigray region and parts of the Amhara region, where minimum security conditions could not be guaranteed.(Sections 1.5, 2.4, and 5.1.3).

Limitations to participation: No registration was conducted in the five contested constituencies of Humera, Adi Remets, Korem Afla, Telemt, and Raya Alamata, and polling was disrupted at approximately 143 stations across Amhara and Oromia (Sections 1.5 and 4.1). CECOE's own long-term observers reported that no registration station had been established, or no registration was taking place, in some parts of Amhara , in several woredas past the close of the extended registration period on 22 April 2026 (Section 5.4.10.13). CECOE qualifies this finding as follows. The formal suspension decisions were, on the record available, reasonable responses to conditions the Board did not create. But the loss of franchise extended beyond what the Board publicly acknowledged, and the reports distinguish two situations that require different responses and carry different responsibility. In the first, security conditions permitted registration and the administrative apparatus was in place, and registration nonetheless did not occur because materials, officials, or both failed to arrive. Observers recorded this pattern in Tarmaber and Debre Sina, where the local security status was assessed as permissive and the authorities were prepared, in Hagere Mariam na Kesem, and in Moja na Wadera (Section 5.4.10.13). In Legahida and Dabat the two causes were intertwined, materials having failed to reach the stations under pressure from an armed group (Section 5.4.10.13). In Simada Woreda too due to the existence of armed groups in the area there were no election activities, and comparable conditions were

reported in Sedie Muja and Tach Gayint (Section 5.4.10.13). CECOE assesses the two differently. The second lies outside the Board's power and its remedy turns on the restoration of state presence. The first lies within the Board's power, since it concerns the delivery of materials and the deployment of staff to areas the Board could reach, and CECOE therefore regards the resulting loss of franchise in those localities as rectifiable rather than unavoidable. The Board's public communications did not distinguish between them.

Impact of constituency delimitation : Constituency boundaries drawn in 1994 for a projected population of 53.5 million were used to elect a parliament for an estimated population of 109.5 million, implying approximately 208,570 people per regular constituency against an original target of 100,000 within a band of 50,000 to 150,000 (Section 5.1.2). The 2007 census results were never applied to boundaries, the House of Federation having rejected a NEBE proposal to re-delimit on that basis, and the deviation-management rule permitting a maximum 15 % average population deviation has never been applied in practice (Section 5.1.2). Administrative reorganizations since 1994 have left voters in some localities casting ballots in constituencies administered from a different zone or regional state, contrary to Article 13(1) of Proclamation No. 1162/2019 (Section 5.1.2). The Board's response, densifying polling stations within unchanged boundaries so that the average rose from 90.7 to 96.3 stations per constituency, is administratively rational but does not remedy, and arguably masks, the malapportionment (Section 5.1.3). CECOE assesses that the principle of one person, one vote, one value could not be met in practice in this election.

Physical Accessibility of Registration and Polling Stations: Accessibility divides sharply between the two phases of the process, and the contrast is the analytical point. During voter registration only 485 of the 3,953 manual stations observed, or 12 %, and 103 of the 443 tablet stations, or 23 %, allowed persons with disabilities to enter without assistance, and only 437 manual stations, or 11 %, and 88 tablet stations, or 20 %, were accessible to registrants with mobility limitations (Section 5.1.9). On election day the position was reversed. Of the polling stations observed, 94 % were assessed as convenient for persons with disabilities to enter and vote without an assistant, 95 % as convenient for women, and 96 % as convenient for the elderly, pregnant women, parents carrying infants, and voters with mobility difficulties. Queue controllers gave priority to entitled voters at 94 % of stations, and voters requiring support were permitted an assistant of their own choosing at 91 % (Section 5.2.2). CECOE assesses that the standard applied on polling day is achievable, since the Board achieved it, and that the question raised by the record is why it was not applied to the registration stations that govern access to polling day.

Persons with Disabilities in Registration and Polling: The record for persons with disabilities divides on the same line as the accessibility findings recorded above, where the entry figures for registration and polling stations are set out. Two further findings bear specifically on persons with disabilities. The legally required reading aloud of assisted registrants' information was followed at only 46 % of manual and 37 % of tablet stations (Section 5.1.9). Persons with

disabilities served as election officers at only 93 manual and 15 tablet registration stations, and 87 % of polling stations had no official with a disability (Section 2.3). CECOIE concludes that inclusion was designed into the voting day and not into the registration that precedes it, and that the second is the more consequential of the two, because a citizen who cannot enter a registration station never reaches the accessible polling station.

Persons with Disabilities among Candidates: Among candidates, 275 of 10,438, or 2.6 %, had a recorded disability, comprising 2.4 % of House candidates and 2.7 % of council candidates, and 206 men against 69 women. The recorded share ranges from 6.0 % of candidates in Addis Ababa to 0.3 % in Somali, a spread the underlying population does not plausibly explain and which CECOIE reads as variation in the willingness or opportunity to declare (Section 5.1.5). The figure is qualified on the ground that the dataset records disability only where declared, with no structured non-disclosure option, so that the true prevalence is likely understated and participation can be inferred but not measured. CECOIE assesses that this is itself a finding, because a form of participation that is not measured cannot be managed or improved against a baseline.

Accessibility of Voter Information: Voter education was delivered in sign language according to 19 % of reports and in Braille according to under 1 %, while 21 % reported neither, and accredited civil society organizations raised the late availability of Braille materials during the accreditation process itself (Sections 5.1.6 and 5.1.9). CECOIE assesses that the accessible formats were treated as an addition to the voter-education programme rather than as part of its design, which is why they arrived late and reached a small proportion of the areas observed.

Women in the Administration of the Process: Women's participation in administering the election was substantial. More than one female officer was present at 60 % of observed polling stations and exactly one at 32 % (Section 5.2.1), and female queue controllers were assigned at 97 % of manual and 98 % of tablet registration stations (Section 5.1.9). Women were 46 % of the 54,057,861 registered voters (Section 2.4) and 25.8 % of the 10,438 candidates, a share that reflects, in part, the incentives described above (Section 5.1.5). A female official was therefore present at 92 % of observed polling stations, with women averaging one officer in four, while 205 stations, or 8 %, had none assigned (Section 5.2.1). CECOIE assesses the deployment of women as election officers as close to complete in coverage and modest in proportion, and records it as the gender achievement of the cycle at the operational level.

Women in registration and polling Station Leadership: Women headed only 17 % of manual registration stations, 25 % of tablet stations, and 26 % of polling stations (Sections 2.3 and 5.2.1). CECOIE assesses that women were included in the process in numbers and were included in the direction of the process in smaller numbers. The gap is not uniform. At tablet registration stations and at polling stations, women's share of station headships, at 25 % and 26 %, is close to their share of officer posts, so that leadership tracked availability. At manual registration stations, where women headed 17%, it did not, and CECOIE assesses that shortfall as a matter of

appointment practice rather than of availability, since the women who would have filled those posts were already serving at the same stations.

Women's Candidacies: Women's share of candidacies was lower in the House of Peoples' Representatives contest, at 23.1 %, than in the regional and city council contests, at 26.4 %, leaving the more consequential contest the less inclusive of the two, and only 5 of the 80 independent candidates were women (Section 5.1.5). The candidate data show that the inclusion incentives written into the funding and airtime formulas are capable of moving party behavior but did so unevenly: the Prosperity Party fielded women as 38.6 % of its 2,941 candidates and the Renaissance Party as 42.2 % of its 315, while among the largest opposition contestants the shares were 11.7 % for EZEMA, 14.8 % for the Freedom and Equality Party and 18.3 % for the Cooperation for Ethiopian Unity (Section 5.1.5). Women's share of the field also varied by region, from 34.2 % in Dire Dawa and 33.4 % in Oromia to 16.9 % in Somali (Section 5.1.5). CECOE assesses that the binding constraint on women's candidacies in this cycle was the candidate-selection practice of the parties rather than the legal framework, which rewarded the fielding of women and was answered unevenly.

Violence Against Women in Elections: The record contains two incidents in which women were targeted as women. In Mekane Selam Town threats delivered by SMS were directed specifically at female election officials, who withdrew from duty and were replaced by men (Section 5.4.10.12); and at the 6Le1 station in Atse Tewodros Woreda, Bahir Dar, voters harassed the female official conducting the entrance search until she was intimidated at her post (Section 5.4.11.17). CECOE records both as isolated incidents and draws no pattern from them. They are the only cases in the observation record in which pressure was directed at a person by reason of her sex, and they were identified from the narrative accounts of observers rather than by any instrument designed to find them. The methodology of this observation did not provide for the systematic capture of violence against women in elections: the checklists recorded threats, violence and intimidation against registrants, officers and observers as a single undifferentiated category, without disaggregation by the sex of the person affected (Sections 4.1 and 5.1.9), and no confidential reporting channel or dedicated verification protocol was deployed. CECOE therefore states plainly that the prevalence of violence against women in this election cannot be established from the data collected, that the absence of further incidents in this report is evidence of the limits of the instrument rather than of the safety of the environment, and that the remedy lies in the methodology of citizen observation itself.

The Geography of Digitalization: The cycle's flagship innovation carried its own exclusionary geography. Technology-enabled stations were concentrated in Addis Ababa, where all of the city's stations were so designated, and in Central and South Ethiopia and urban Oromia, while Afar and Gambella had none and Somali only 354, which concentrated the burden of paper-based procedures in peripheral regions (Section 5.1.3). CECOE assesses that the distribution followed existing connectivity rather than electoral need, so that the reform's benefits fell to the regions already best served and its burdens to those least served.

Digital Prerequisites and Candidacy: The digital prerequisites for candidacy had reported effects on opposition slates. The Cooperation for Ethiopian Unity reported that between 255 and 300 of its qualifying candidates went unregistered owing to disruptions in the digital system, the Ethiopian National Unity Party reported that its slate fell from 1,100 to 167 because members had not obtained national digital IDs, and the Freedom and Equality Party reported losing 250 candidates who had not realized a national ID was mandatory (Section 5.1.5). CECOE records alongside these reports that the Board rejected the allegations in a detailed written response and extended candidate registration by two weeks with training, manuals, a toll-free hotline, and a dedicated support channel (Sections 2.5 and 5.1.5), and that the Coalition's request for access to the back end of the system, which would have allowed the competing accounts to be tested, was not granted (Section 6.1). CECOE therefore does not adjudicate between the accounts and assesses only that the requirement placed an administrative burden on some parties in the weeks before the deadline.

Digital Prerequisites and Voter Registration: The same sequencing question arises on the voter side, in a weaker form. Possession of a Fayda National ID is compulsory for citizens using the digital self-registration channel, through which more than 5.5 million of the 54,057,861 registrations were made, while the assisted modality accommodates registrants whether or not they hold one (Sections 2.4, 2.5 and 3.4). The assisted route is a real safeguard and CECOE records it as such, but it places citizens without a national ID in a slower, officer-mediated channel at stations where the legally required reading aloud of assisted registrants' information was observed at fewer than half of stations, so that the credential shapes the quality of the registration experience even where it does not bar it. CECOE's assessment across both limbs is that the direction of the reform is sound and its sequencing was not, since a digital credential should acquire legal effect on candidacy, and practical effect on the route to registration, only once it is already near-universal.

Inclusion through Voter Education: Voter education was the mechanism by which an inclusive process was to be made intelligible to first-time and rural voters, and its coverage was incomplete. In 2,755 reports, or 45 %, observers recorded no voter education having been seen or heard in their area at all, and in 2,972 reports, or 49 %, there was none available to assess for frequency (Section 5.1.9). Local languages were used according to 2,662 reports, or 44 %, while 552 reports, or 9 %, recorded education only in the federal working language (Section 5.1.9). Content coverage was strongest on eligibility and documentation, explained correctly in 57 to 58 % of reports, and weakest on the mechanics that determine whether a ballot counts: the step-by-step voting process was clearly explained in 38 % of reports and not explained in 13 %, ballot marking and invalid ballots in 33 % against 15 %, and complaint procedures for both phases in only 30 %, with 15 % recording no explanation of complaint procedures at all (Section 5.1.9).

6.3. Participation

Voter Registration and Turnout: By raw measures of public engagement, voter participation in Ethiopia's general elections has expanded steadily over successive cycles. Beginning with the first general election in 1995, registration stood at 21.34 million voters, of whom 20.07 million cast ballots, a turnout of 94.1 %. Participation subsequently reached 21.83 million registered voters and 89.8 % turnout during the second election in 2000, and 27.37 million registered voters during the highly contested third election in 2005, when 22.61 million ballots were cast and turnout fell to 82.6 %, the lowest recorded in the series. Engagement recovered through the fourth election in 2010, which recorded 31.93 million registered voters and 93.4 % turnout, and rose further in the fifth election in 2015 to 36.85 million registered voters and 93.2 % turnout. Voter registration expanded to 39.39 million during the sixth election in 2021, while turnout declined slightly to 89.07 %. Engagement ultimately peaked during the Seventh General Election, which recorded 54,057,861 registered voters, including over 5.5 million digital registrations, and culminated in 51,734,193 total ballots cast, representing a 95 % turnout rate (Sections 2.4 and 5.3.4).¹⁴⁵ CECOIE notes that the 2005 figures, and the direction of turnout in that cycle, are frequently misreported in secondary sources; the figures given here follow the Inter-Parliamentary Union record and the divergence between sources is set out in the accompanying note.

Table 10: Registered voters and turnout, Ethiopian general elections 1995–2026

General election	Year	Registered voters	Ballots cast	Turnout
First	1995	21,337,379	20,068,508	94.1%
Second	2000	21,834,806	19,607,841	89.8%
Third	2005	27,372,888	22,610,690	82.6%
Fourth	2010	31,926,520	29,832,190	93.4%
Fifth	2015	36,851,461	34,351,444	93.2%
Sixth	2021	39,395,768	35,090,503	89.07%
Seventh	2026	54,057,861	51,734,193	95%

Impact of Pressure on Turnout: The pressure brought to bear on voters ran in two directions, and the Board itself recognized the second of them. In a public statement issued during the registration period on the breaches of law it had observed, NEBE recorded reports of officials moving from house to house telling citizens to take voter cards, of registration being improperly linked to the receipt of social services, and of pressure applied by connecting registration to

¹⁴⁵ Inter-Parliamentary Union, PARLINE database, Ethiopia: House of Peoples' Representatives, elections held in 2005. Secondary sources variously report a higher turnout for that cycle; the figures given here follow the Inter-Parliamentary Union record.

citizens' employment; it notified the regional governments and city administrations and their executives at every level to refrain from such canvassing, affirmed that registering is voluntary and that no salary, employment or social service depends upon it, and warned that it could identify the constituencies and polling stations concerned and act to prevent the election being held in them (Section 5.4.10.10).

Residents of Enarj Enawga feared to register or to hold voter cards after an armed group declared that action would be taken against participants (Section 5.4.3), and in areas under armed-group influence registrants surrendered cards they had already obtained (Section 5.4.10.7). In Meket, Gazo and Ambasel the same declarations were directed at election officials and observers rather than at citizens, and their effect was to halt registration altogether rather than to deter individual registrants (Sections 5.4.2, 5.4.3 and 5.4.10.12). In others citizens were compelled: election officers in Jawi Woreda required registrants to take cards for absent family members, officers in Antsokiya and Gemza told residents that every person over 18 was obliged to take a card, residents of Mekoy were summoned to security-guarded meetings and registered there, and drivers in Wegde Woreda and mothers attending vaccination sessions in Sayint Ajibar were registered in the course of unrelated business (Sections 5.4.10.5 and 5.4.10.10). Alongside both, local officeholders monitored who had registered. A kebele chairman inspected registration status at the station, mobilizers in Kombolcha asked officers how many people had come and stated that they had sent people to register, officials in Shashego asked who had and had not registered, and officials in Ofa Woreda collected card-uptake figures; unauthorized persons of this kind, among them kebele leaders and administrators, security personnel and local party coordinators, were present at 83 of 3,953 manual stations, or 2%, and at 19 of 443 tablet stations, or 4 % (Sections 5.1.9 and 5.4.10.8). CECOE assesses that these practices were recorded at a small proportion of observed stations and were nonetheless systematic in character where they occurred, being carried out by officials in the exercise of their functions rather than by individuals acting alone.

Contestant Participation: Participation by contestants moved in two directions at once. The number of parties contesting fell from 47 in 2021 to 42 in 2026, two of the latter competing as fronts, while the number of candidates rose from approximately 9,000 to 10,438, an increase of roughly 16 % (Section 5.1.5). New parties were certified during the cycle, among them Wudib Woldo Tigray, Democratic Simret Tigray, the Denta People's Democratic Party, the People by People (Humanity) Party, and the Sidama Rational Democratic Party (Section 5.1.8), and coalition-building produced the Somali People's Alliance for Self-Determination, the Cooperation for Ethiopian Unity, and the Peace for Ethiopia Coalition alongside the established Medrek (Section 1.3). CECOE assesses that the field deepened in candidate terms while narrowing in party terms, and that neither movement can be read on its own.

The Extent of Choice Available to Voters: Of the 1,153 electoral areas mapped, 958, or 83.1 %, were contested by more than one party. The remaining 195, or 16.9 %, offered no choice between parties: in 114 several candidates stood but all for one party, and in 81 a single candidate

stood unopposed. In 185 of those 195 areas the sole party on the ballot was the Prosperity Party. Measured by presence rather than by candidate numbers, the Prosperity Party appeared on the ballot in 1,105 of the 1,153 areas, or 95.8 %, against 46.0 % for EZEMA, 38.4 % for the Cooperation for Ethiopian Unity and 33.1 % for the Freedom and Equality Party (Section 5.1.5). CECOIE assesses reach rather than candidate volume as the structural asymmetry of the field, since a party holding 28.2 % of the candidacies was nonetheless the default option on almost every ballot in the country, and no other contestant appeared in even half of the electoral areas.

Absent and Nominal Participation: Participation was narrower than the aggregate figures suggest. The TPLF, the dominant political force of the Tigray region, entered the electoral period without legal identity following its second deregistration on 14 May 2025 and remained outside the contest entirely (Sections 1.2 and 5.1.8). The Oromo Liberation Front and the Oromo Federalist Congress, facing deregistration for missing two consecutive national elections, adopted a strategy of highly restricted, nominal participation, the OFC running principally in secured urban zones and the OLF in constituencies outside the capital, both largely bypassing their rural grassroots base (Section 1.3). CECOIE assesses that a contest in which the principal regional opposition forces take part chiefly in order to preserve their legal registration falls short of full competitiveness, however high the aggregate figures.

Gaps in the Competitive Map: The competitive map contained gaps in both directions. The ruling party was unopposed in 65 House constituencies and absent altogether from 48 of the 509 mapped House electoral areas, while declining to field candidates in 284 regional and city council seats (Section 5.1.5). Of the 195 areas that offered no choice between parties, 105 were in Oromia, 42 in Amhara and 32 in Dire Dawa, 92 % of the total, and six regions recording none at all (Section 5.1.5). CECOIE assesses that the concentration, rather than the national total, is what matters: an absence of choice distributed evenly across the country would indicate weak party organization, whereas an absence concentrated in two conflict-affected regions and one city administration indicates two different causes operating in different places.

Accreditation and the Scale of Oversight: Citizen oversight of the process was broad in the aggregate. NEBE accredited 224 civil society organizations, 169 for voter education and 55 for observation, and accredited observer organizations obtained accreditation for 65,299 domestic observers across more than 500 constituencies, although the number actually deployed is not established in the public record; more than 1,100 journalists from 37 media institutions were accredited (Sections 2.6 and 5.1.6). CECOIE assesses the accreditation figures as a substantial formal opening to independent scrutiny, and an advance on previous cycles in the number of organizations admitted.

Oversight at the Point of Delivery: That breadth was thin at the point of delivery. Party agents were present at only 14 % of observed registration stations of either type and at 65 % of polling stations on election day, and non-CECOIE citizen observers at 8 % of manual and 12 % of tablet registration stations and 76 % of polling stations (Sections 5.4 and 5.2). CECOIE assesses this as

the most consequential participation gap in the cycle, because the actors with the strongest legal standing to lodge complaints were absent from the great majority of registration stations, and Section 5.3.5 shows that the Board's dismissals turned repeatedly on the absence of contemporaneous complaints made at the station (Section 5.3.5.5). CECOIE states the connection at the level the evidence supports. It does not hold that every station at which a serious violation occurred lacked an agent or an observer, and the record does not permit a station-by-station test of that proposition. What the incident record does establish is that a number of the gravest documented violations, including the marking and stuffing of ballots at Timbaro Fera with no other party representative present to object and the counting of ballot boxes off site with no observer present, occurred in the absence of any independent witness, and that the same absence then defeated the complaints subsequently brought (Sections 5.4.11.8, 5.4.11.18.1 and 5.3.5.5).

The Legal Environment for Citizen Oversight: The regulatory framework within which citizen oversight operates moved against it during the cycle. The Civil Society Organizations Proclamation No. 1113/2019 is the instrument that made coalitions such as CECOIE possible and that underpins the accreditation of voter-education and observer organizations, and draft amendments to it circulated from mid-2025. Positively, the latest draft eliminates initial restrictions like vague national security clauses and foreign funding limits on political advocacy, election observation, and voter education. This safeguards domestic observers' financial viability, prevents arbitrary intervention, and respects the National Election Board of Ethiopia's (NEBE) accreditation authority, though support letters from the Authority for Civil Society Organizations (ACSO) are still required. Conversely, serious structural flaws threaten regulatory independence: the Ministry of Justice gains a controlling majority on the CSO governing board, and removing judicial review deprives organizations of court appeals against administrative suspensions or dissolutions.

Participation Suppressed by Insecurity: Participation was suppressed outright where security failed. Observers reported deterioration of the security environment in 418 reports, or 7 %, and unusual deployments of armed state or non-state forces in 274 reports, or 4.5 %, concentrated in the Amhara and Oromia zones listed in Section 5.1.9. In several woredas no registration, campaigning, or voting took place at all, election officials were killed, abducted, and threatened, and residents feared to register or to hold voter cards (Sections 5.4.1 to 5.4.3 and 5.4.10.13). CECOIE assesses that in these localities the question of participation did not arise, because the electoral process itself was not present to be participated in.

The Unfinished Political Settlement: Beyond security, the political settlement the election was meant to express remained unfinished. The Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission's mandate had twice been extended, most recently to October 2026, so that the questions the dialogue was established to settle, including the future of ethnic federalism and potential constitutional reform, remained open throughout the campaign (Section 1.4). CECOIE assesses that voting ahead of the conclusion of the national dialogue left the contest without an agreed constitutional frame, so that the parties competed for a mandate whose scope was itself among the matters in dispute.

6.4. Fairness

Public Campaign Funding: Public campaign funding was transferred to 36 political parties under a formula weighting parliamentary representation, candidates fielded, and female candidacies, with independent candidates receiving a base grant of ETB 200,000 plus supplements of 25 % for women, 35 % for women with disabilities, and 15 % for candidates with disabilities (Sections 3.4 and 5.1.7). CECOE assesses the formula as well designed for its purpose, since it rewards both breadth of contest and inclusion, and records that its effect depended on disbursement, which is addressed below.

Free Airtime, the Ballot-Order Lottery and Debates: Free airtime across 50 media outlets was allocated by public lottery conducted with the Ethiopian Media Authority on 28 March 2026, so that no party, including the ruling party, could claim the most favorable slots, and a ballot-order lottery neutralized positional advantage (Section 5.1.7). Election-period programming reached approximately 782 hours of radio, 570 hours of television, and 576 newspaper columns in Amharic, Afaan Oromo, Somali, Afar, and Sidama across 24 radio stations, 20 television stations, and 6 newspapers, with 16 further subsidiary and multilingual channels, and 19 nationally broadcast debate forums were organized (Section 5.1.7). Observers assessed debate fairness positively, with 47 % of reports finding equal speaking opportunity against 5 % finding otherwise (Section 5.1.9). CECOE assesses that these instruments materially improved the visibility of smaller parties, since the lottery gave them broadcast slots and newspaper columns they could not have purchased and the debate forums placed them before a national audience on equal speaking terms, and that the improvement operated at the margin of the contest rather than at its centre, because the incumbency advantage of organizational reach and privileged access to state institutions was left untouched by them (Section 5.1.7).

Fairness at the Polling Station: At the great majority of observed stations the contest was administered even-handedly. Campaign materials and activities were absent from stations and their 200-metre surroundings at 100 % of observed stations, election officials gave neutral voting instructions at 99 %, indelible ink was applied at 96 % and ballot papers were stamped at 97 %, ballot boxes were shown empty before sealing at essentially all stations and placed in clear view at 100 %, and the secrecy of the ballot was respected at 93 % (Sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.2). CECOE records these figures as the baseline against which the violations below must be read: the violations were real, verified, and serious, and they were also exceptions rather than the norm at the stations the Coalition covered.

Regulatory Gaps in Campaign Finance: The legal framework imposes no ceiling on campaign expenditures and lacks effective mechanisms to regulate online fundraising. Furthermore, the disbursement of public funding reached 23 political parties late, or not at all, by the time of NEBE's announcement, a delay that in a compressed campaign fell hardest on the same small parties the funding formula was designed to assist, since they had no alternative resources to draw on in the interval (Section 5.1.7). In addition, EZEMA publicly alleged that compulsory

campaign contributions were being imposed on the business community, conduct which, if substantiated, would violate both the donation rules of Proclamation No. 1162/2019 and the Code of Conduct's prohibition on coercion and undue influence (Section 5.1.7). CECOE assesses that the absence of an expenditure ceiling creates a structural gap in the fairness framework, because every other equalization instrument operates at the margin of a contest whose overall scale of spending is unregulated.

Misuse of State Resources: The structural advantage of incumbency is documented at every phase of this report. Observers recorded the use of government vehicles, identified by their official plates, for campaign purposes in 112 pre-election reports, or 1.8 %, campaigns held in prohibited locations in 54 reports, and the use of the name, emblem, or symbol of a religious organization in 20 reports (Section 5.1.9). The incident record contains a police vehicle used for ruling party campaigning in Gozamin Woreda, a government vehicle used in Nekemte City Administration, a woreda administrator in Sofi Woreda of the Harari region taken into police custody after campaigning from his official vehicle, government motorcycles and kebele employees campaigning under cover of official work in South Sodo Woreda, and woreda officials displaying the ruling party emblem inside the Kidane Mihret church in Tach Armachiho Woreda (Section 5.4.5). Kebele and woreda officeholders entered polling stations and directed both officials and voters (Sections 5.4.11.11 and 5.4.11.20).

Recurrence of the Conduct Across Regions: The conduct recorded above was not confined to one part of the country. It appears in the Amhara, Oromia, Harari, Central Ethiopia and South Ethiopia regions (Sections 5.1.9 and 5.4.5), and is therefore not properly described as isolated to a handful of localities, although the number of reports remains small against the volume of observation CECOE conducted.

Conduct Committed in Public View: In several instances the conduct was committed openly by officeholders acting in their official capacity, among them the woreda administrator in Sofi Woreda who campaigned from the government vehicle assigned to him for official duties, and the woreda officials in Tach Armachiho who, having addressed a church congregation about local security, closed by displaying the ruling party emblem and campaigning for it (Section 5.4.5).

Enforcement of the Prohibition on State Resources: The difficulty is one of enforcement rather than of legal absence. The use of state resources for electoral advantage is already prohibited by the electoral legal framework and by the Election Code of Conduct signed by all 48 registered parties (Sections 3.1 and 3.4), yet the record contains a single instance of enforcement, the detention of the Sofi Woreda administrator, against 112 reported instances of government vehicles used for campaigning, 54 campaigns held in prohibited locations and 20 uses of a religious organization's name or emblem (Section 5.1.9), and no complaint in the Board's register was decided on this ground (Section 5.3.5.1). CECOE assesses that the prohibition operated during this campaign as a statement of principle enforced by exception

rather than as a rule applied in the ordinary course, and reads the openness with which the conduct recorded above was committed as consistent with that assessment.

Obstruction of Opposition Organization: Fairness was compromised before the campaign began through obstruction of opposition organization. The founding general assemblies of the Kontoma People's Democratic Party and the Denta People's Democratic Party, both certified by NEBE itself, were obstructed despite the Board having formally notified the regional government administration and police commission in advance (Section 5.1.8). An EPRP rally planned for 6 December 2025 was blocked when the host venue was pressured into cancelling its rental contract (Section 5.1.8). Balderas for True Democracy, Gogot for Guraghe Unity and Justice, and the Enat Party were prevented from holding the general assemblies the law requires (Section 5.1.5). Members of the Kucha People's Democratic Party, the Peace Coalition in Arba Minch, the Oromo Federalist Congress, and the Gumuz People's Democratic Movement were arrested, and in several cases beaten or tortured, at district level (Section 5.1.8). CECOE assesses that the obstruction of assemblies the Board had itself notified to the authorities indicates a limit to the Board's practical authority over other arms of the state.

The Civic Space Assessed: CECOE assesses the civic space in both directions. Positively, the space was open: parties contested, registered and held congresses, civil society engaged, and media reported, and 72 of the 84 documented assemblies, or 86 %, proceeded without obstruction, in several instances with the facilitation or protection of state authorities (Section 5.1.8). That openness was, however, largely confined to the capital, the major urban centers and localities where the security situation was stable. The process recorded limitations on the conduct of founding assemblies of newly certified and opposition parties, which NEBE intervened to condemn and sought to have rectified, and the space narrowed markedly at district level and in conflict-affected areas (Section 5.1.8). CECOE concludes that the two findings describe the same space seen at two levels of government rather than two competing accounts of it.

Campaigning Where Security Failed: In Bugna and Gugma Woreda no party other than the ruling party was observed operating, and ruling party leaders campaigned under military escort whereas competing parties refrained from participating on account of security threats; in Enarj Enawga Woreda the same pattern obtained; In Quarit Woreda, armed forces restricted the ruling party's movements, even though it was the only party present; and in Dega Damot Woreda no party could campaign at all between 4 and 21 April 2026 (Sections 5.4.3 and 5.4.5). CECOE assesses that in these four woredas the campaign was not a contest between parties on any terms, and that the constraint was imposed by armed actors rather than by the electoral administration.

Election-Day Conduct in Insecure Localities: The election-day record documents ballot marking and box-stuffing in favor of the ruling party, including at the Ayne Eyesus station in Bugna Woreda where the chairperson entered the booth on behalf of absent registered voters, at the Chilga Ha2 station where officials marked and inserted cards at about 12:30 a.m. saying “the first ballot box is not full,” and at the Timbaro Fera station where cadres and officials cast more

than 50 votes with no other party representative present to object (Section 5.4.11.8). Ruling party representatives pressured officials during counts across Sidama, Amhara, Oromia, and the SNNP region (Section 5.4.11.18.3). CECOE assesses that these practices were concentrated in a minority of localities, all of them in areas where the security environment was already compromised or where armed actors set the terms on which parties could operate, and that they were not observed as a general feature of the election: they are recorded at named stations rather than across the board.

The Coincidence of Constrained Contest and Absent Oversight: The pattern CECOE draws from the two records above is one of coincidence rather than of scale. The localities in which the contest was most constrained were disproportionately those in which party agents and independent observers were absent, so that the field was least contested where oversight was weakest. CECOE regards this correlation as the most consequential analytical finding of the election-day record and returns to it in Chapter 7, because it means that the places where an independent witness would have mattered most were the places least likely to have one, and that the resulting evidentiary gap then defeated the complaints brought from those same localities (Section 5.3.5.5).

6.5. Accountability

The Accountability Framework: The accountability framework was strengthened on paper. Proclamation No. 1394/2025 dissolved the polling-station grievance hearing committee in favor of direct submission to the polling station head, subject to a formal conflict-of-interest disclosure and a right of recusal, and restructured the constituency level around a three-member committee including two publicly elected members selected on criteria of gender balance and non-partisanship, with appeal preserved to successive levels and ultimately to the courts (Sections 3.1 and 3.4). All 48 registered parties signed the revised Election Code of Conduct at a public ceremony in early 2026 (Section 3.4). Accreditation functioned as a gatekeeping and decertification mechanism binding observers, voter educators, and media to codes of conduct (Section 5.1.6). The appointment of the Board's chairperson and members followed the statutory committee procedure, and in the 2025 round the required consultation with political parties did occur, the Ethiopian Political Parties Joint Council confirming receipt of a nomination request and consultations with a representative of the Prime Minister (Section 5.1.1).

The Board's Use of Its Public Voice: The Board used its public voice to a meaningful degree. It condemned the obstruction of the Balderas for True Democracy, Gogot and Enat assemblies and called on the Ministry of Justice to investigate and prosecute those responsible (Section 5.1.5). It cautioned parties misusing temporary registration certificates and reminded government institutions not to establish official relations with them (Section 5.1.5). It convened political parties on 11 March 2026 to hear constituency-level security concerns and committed to establishing joint monitoring teams comprising Board monitors, party representatives, and civil society (Sections 1.5 and 5.1.5). CECOE assesses these interventions as the Board acting beyond its administrative function, in defence of conditions it needed but did not control.

The Board's Decisions on Complaints: On the complaints before it, the Board partially upheld 33 of 119 cases and fully upheld 3, ordering re-votes in Soro 01 and Tembaro and a repeat poll at the single Denbech station in Burji. It ordered administrative measures against election officials in 28 decisions and referred implicated officials, and in several Somali-region cases woreda and kebele leaders, to the police and public prosecutor in 22 decisions, in a number of cases invoking Article 148 of Proclamation No. 1162/2019. It ordered recounts on its own motion at 45 stations in Welmera, 57 in Alibo, and 20 in Shambu even while dismissing the complaint before it (Sections 5.3.5.3 and 5.3.5.4). CECOE finds that the Board showed a willingness to hold both its own staff and local government officials accountable, and regards the recounts ordered on its own motion as evidence of a body policing results quality independently of the adversarial process.

Use of the Complaint Channels: Accountability channels were available but little used. Formal complaints were submitted at only 2 % of observed polling stations on election day and were reported in 9 % of post-election reports (Sections 5.2.4 and 5.3.2). CECOE assesses that this low rate cannot be read as an absence of grievance, given the violations documented in Section 5.4. On election day the more likely explanation is the handling of the forms themselves, documented below, since party agents were present at 65 % of polling stations and non-CECOE observers at 76 %. During registration, where agents were present at only 14 % of stations, the absence of anyone with standing to complain is the additional constraint (Section 6.3).

The Evidentiary Threshold: The Board's dismissals turned repeatedly on the absence of a contemporaneous written complaint at the station or before the constituency committee, yet CECOE documented stations at which complaint forms were refused outright, at which complaints were received only orally and never reduced to writing, and at which no complaint form existed at all (Sections 5.4.11.19 and 5.4.11.3). A standard that demands documentation generated by the very process whose custodians are accused of obstructing documentation penalizes complainants for the process's own failures. The disparity in outcomes is stark: every one of the eleven complaints filed by individual citizens was dismissed, against 63 of 100 party complaints and one of six independent-candidate complaints (Section 5.3.5.2). CECOE assesses that the threshold was surmountable by complainants with organizational capacity, agents on the ground and records, and was not surmountable by unrepresented citizens.

Remedy and the Franchise: The Board's preferred remedy, excluding a tainted station's results while refusing a constituency re-vote, protects the integrity of the tally at the price of the franchise, since the voters of an annulled station lose their votes without an opportunity to recast them, and in only three of 119 cases did any electorate vote again (Section 5.3.5.5). CECOE assesses that this remedy resolves the doubt about a result by removing the votes that created it, and that where the annulment follows official misconduct the cost falls on the voters rather than on those responsible.

Independent Verification of the Digital Registration Claims: A further barrier operated upstream of the complaint process altogether. The allegations that opposition slates were reduced by failures of the digital candidate registration system were never independently testable, because the Board declined CECOE's request for access to the back end of that system (Sections 5.1.5 and 6.1). CECOE assesses that where a new system is made a legal prerequisite of candidacy, the capacity to audit its performance should follow the prerequisite, and that in its absence neither the parties' allegations nor the Board's rebuttal can be resolved on the record.

Accountability Still Outstanding: The decisive tests of accountability lie beyond the period covered by this report, and CECOE records them as outstanding rather than failed. The Board's expanded sanctioning powers under Proclamation No. 1394/2025, the most contested element of the amended law, have yet to be applied to the violations documented here (Section 3.1). Those violations include the killing of two election officials and the abduction of a third at Debre Markos, the abductions in Dehana and Nole Kaba Woredas, the beating of the Gogeti station chairperson in Wondo Genet, and the sustained campaign of threats against officials, directed with particular force at female officials, in Mekane Selam, Ambasel, Gazo, and Merawi (Sections 5.4.1, 5.4.2, and 5.4.10.12). They include the removal and off-site counting of ballot boxes, ballot marking and stuffing, and the misuse of state resources (Sections 5.4.5, 5.4.11.8, and 5.4.11.18.1). The register of complaints records referrals to police and prosecutors and directions for administrative action, but not their outcomes (Section 5.3.5.5). The post-election detentions, in which NEBE and polling officials were themselves the most frequently identified targets, appearing in 12 reports, require particular scrutiny, as does the unresolved delimitation question, in which the power to draw boundaries rests with a political chamber under a procedure requiring no public consultation (Sections 5.3.3 and 5.1.2). CECOE will assess the complaints and dispute-resolution record, and the accountability measures actually taken, in the final version of this report.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. Conclusions

CECOE concludes that the Seventh General Election was administered with technical competence and adhered to standard procedures in most polling stations. The election saw increased participation from voters, candidates, civil society, media, and political parties, and, for the most part, was followed by a peaceful post-election period. The election's main achievements were in its administration, particularly the adherence to the electoral calendar and increased transparency in operational procedures.

At the same time, the election faced structural and security-related challenges. The most critical issue was that not all citizens had the same opportunity to vote, with elections failing to take place in 46 constituencies across the Tigray and Amhara regions. Furthermore, long-standing structural problems, such as the use of outdated 1994 constituency boundaries and the late publication of the electoral calendar, hindered the process.

While participation reached record levels, these figures must be contextualized alongside reports of administrative pressure and coercion during registration. While the legal framework and digital reforms showed promise for inclusion, implementation gaps—particularly regarding accessibility for persons with disabilities at registration stations—remain a priority for improvement. Violence and undue pressure, including direct threats and assaults against election officials, were concentrated in certain areas and affected female officers.

The framework for accountability was strengthened, though the complaints process proved difficult for ordinary citizens to navigate without local representation. The outcomes of criminal referrals and administrative measures ordered by the Board have yet to be made public, which remains a critical step for transparency.

Despite these challenges, the Seventh General Election demonstrated an administrative capacity upon which Ethiopia can build toward more transparent, inclusive, and participatory elections. With continued effort from the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE), the Government, Parliament, security agencies, political parties, the media, and civil society, future elections can achieve greater reach and strengthen public confidence in the electoral process. CECOЕ offers these findings and recommendations in a spirit of constructive engagement and remains committed to the independent citizen observation of Ethiopia's elections.

7.2. Recommendations

In the spirit of constructive engagement, CECOE offers the following recommendations to improve future elections in Ethiopia.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

For the Immediate Period

The NEBE should publish the outcomes of the criminal referrals and administrative directions recorded in its register of complaints on the Seventh General Election, so that the accountability measures it has ordered can be seen to have been carried through.

The NEBE should revise its guidance on the evidentiary requirements applied in electoral dispute resolution so that the absence of a contemporaneous written complaint is not treated as dispositive where the complainant alleges, and the record supports, that complaint forms were unavailable or refused or that agents and observers were excluded from the proceedings in question.

For the Longer Term

The electoral law and the directives subsidiary to the Electoral Proclamation should be complete, consolidated, and published in a single accessible collection well in advance of each electoral cycle.

The Electoral Proclamation should be amended to enhance the rules on campaign finance. It should establish a ceiling on political parties' campaign expenditure, introduce online and crowdfunded contributions within the disclosure and foreign-source prohibitions that apply to other donations, and provide the public with timely access to party finance information, with the intent of promoting greater equity and fairness in the campaign and of promoting accountability.

The prohibition on the use of state resources for electoral advantage already exists in the electoral legal framework and in the Election Code of Conduct, and the difficulty documented in this report is one of specificity and enforcement rather than of absence. The framework should therefore be amended to enumerate what the prohibition covers, including personnel, vehicles, materials, equipment, procurements, permits, and public premises, and to establish provisions for effective enforcement, including a clear complaint route, evidentiary standards suited to the way such conduct is observed in the field, and appropriate powers granted to the NEBE, prosecutors, and the courts. The 112 reports of government vehicles used for campaigning recorded in this cycle produced no recorded sanction, which is the enforcement gap the amendment should close.

The requirements for national party status introduced by the amendment, and in particular the obligation to collect 60 % of supporting signatures from at least six regional states and to maintain organized membership structures in those regions, should be reassessed against the

practical conditions prevailing in conflict-affected regions, so that parties are not deprived of national status by insecurity they cannot control.

ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

For the Immediate Period

The NEBE should ensure that the legal provisions requiring the count to be conducted at the polling station where the votes were cast, and requiring the posting of the results declaration and reconciliation form at the station door, are respected without exception, and it should treat the removal of a ballot box for counting elsewhere as a reportable event requiring written justification, notice to observers and party agents present, and their admission to the count at its new location.

The NEBE should ensure that legal provisions mandating the issuance of certified copies of polling station result forms to party and candidate agents after counting are respected. To enhance transparency further and increase voter confidence, the Board should make election results available disaggregated to the polling station level in a timely manner, and could publish online scans of the result forms posted at each polling station on election night.

The NEBE should ensure the timely accreditation of both international and citizen observers, complete accreditation sufficiently in advance of each electoral stage, and communicate observer and agent credentials to all field-level officials. Decentralising the distribution of observer badges to the sub-national level would streamline the process and facilitate its timely execution in future elections. The Board should instruct election officials, in training and by binding directive, that accredited observers and party agents must be admitted to every stage of the process, including counting and tabulation, and should treat unjustified denial of access as a sanctionable offence.

The NEBE should establish a rapid-response channel through which accredited observers and party agents can escalate denial of entry, obstruction, or intimidation for same-day resolution, and should enforce strict credential verification at registration and polling stations so that only accredited persons perform or witness electoral functions.

The NEBE should act on the repeated unauthorized assistance to voters documented in this report. Assistance was provided by a person other than the chairperson to different voters more than once at 87 of the 2,506 observed polling stations, or 3 %, and voters needing support were denied a helper of their own choosing at 32 stations. The Board should issue binding guidance restating that a voter requiring assistance chooses their own helper, that no person other than the station chairperson may assist more than one voter, and that each instance of assistance is to be recorded in the station minutes with the identity of the assistant; and it should train polling station chairpersons to intervene when the pattern recurs, since repeated assistance by a single

individual is a recurrent mechanism through which the secrecy of the ballot was lost in this cycle.

For the Longer Term

The NEBE should publish its electoral calendar, and subsequent updates to it, in line with the Open Election Data Initiative, and should do so no later than one year before polling day, so that no substantive electoral activity is conducted before the schedule governing it has been made public. Candidate lists should be released promptly after the close of candidate registration, and candidate substitutions and withdrawals should be communicated to the public.

The NEBE should develop and implement an inclusive, permanent voters' roll, including a mechanism to facilitate its continuous update, so that registration is not repeated in full at each cycle and citizens in insecure areas are not disenfranchised by the failure of a single registration window.

Measures should be taken to ensure the equality of the vote between constituencies. Deviations should not exceed the 15 % foreseen in the law, in accordance with international good practice. A comprehensive national census should precede a new delimitation exercise; in its absence, an inclusive dialogue should be conducted to agree the measures to be taken.

The NEBE should sequence digital prerequisites so that no digital credential acquires legal effect on candidacy or registration until it is demonstrably available to the population it governs, and should retain fully functional manual and assisted alternatives at every stage for as long as coverage remains uneven.

The NEBE should reduce the maximum number of registered voters assigned to a single polling station. The 1,500-voter ceiling applied in this cycle was overwhelmed on polling day: queues remained at the legal closing time at 88 % of the stations observed by the African Union mission, and voting had to be extended by six hours until midnight, which in turn produced staff fatigue, poor lighting in temporary structures and counts conducted in conditions that observers could not properly witness. A lower ceiling, applied together with an increase in the number of stations, would shorten queues, remove the need for extensions, and avoid the extension from making the count in late night time.

The NEBE should provide accredited observer organizations with read-only access to system performance data, so that allegations of exclusion can be tested against evidence rather than left, as in this cycle, unresolved between the parties and the Board.

The budget allocated to the NEBE should be raised, and the case for the increase should be made against comparative regional benchmarks. The reported election budget of approximately 11 billion birr for 54,057,861 registered voters amounts to roughly 204 birr per registered voter. . Government and Parliament should commission a cost assessment of the NEBE's requirements

benchmarked against the electoral commissions of comparable African states, including Kenya and Nigeria, on a per-registered-voter basis, and should fund the Board against that assessment rather than against the previous year's allocation.

Training programs should be strengthened to increase the capacity of NEBE personnel at headquarters, regional, constituency and polling station levels, with particular attention to the conduct of the count, the handling of complaints, and the obligations owed to accredited observers, so as to build institutional resilience across cycles.

Strengthening the Board with a broader mix of disciplines—including public administration, statistical analysis, and technology—will ensure a well-rounded governance structure equipped to address modern administrative and technological needs.

SECURITY AND ELECTORAL VIOLENCE

For the Immediate Period

The federal and regional authorities should investigate and prosecute the killings, abductions, and assaults committed against election officials during the Seventh General Election, including the attack at Debre Markos, the abductions in Dehana and Nole Kaba Woredas, and the assault on the chairperson of the Gogeti registration station, and should report publicly on the outcomes. Election officials who were threatened, displaced, or compelled to relocate in the course of their duties should receive appropriate support.

The NEBE's directive identifies the Police as the security agency responsible for electoral security. That designation should be given operational detail in a published directive setting out which units and ranks are authorized to act, at what point in the process, and on whose instruction, and expressly excluding all other armed formations, in order to facilitate operationalisation, enhance transparency, and prevent the involvement of militia in electoral security functions. Security personnel should not enter a registration or polling station except on the invitation of the station head, and the incidents recorded in this report in which militia and riot police entered uninvited should be investigated.

To address existing gaps in identifying violence against women in elections, civil society organizations, NEBE, and other relevant stakeholders should collaborate to develop innovative methodologies and mechanisms to prevent, identify, monitor, and mitigate incidents of violence against women in elections.

For the Longer Term

Training for legally established security organs should be enhanced to include human rights, electoral violence, and electoral security, including violence against women in elections, together with the maintenance of political impartiality, thereby enhancing the professionalism of security providers and contributing to a more secure electoral environment for diverse groups of

stakeholders, with particular attention to women, diverse ethnic groups, persons with disabilities, internally displaced persons, and young people.

A joint electoral violence prevention platform should be established on a permanent basis to facilitate dialogue and reconciliation in the regions during and between elections, building on the joint monitoring teams of Board monitors, party representatives, and civil society deployed in the seventh cycle, and should receive training on the particular risks of violence faced by women and other marginalised populations.

Cooperation between the security agencies, the NEBE and citizen observer groups began in the seventh cycle, through the collaborative security risk-mapping conducted ahead of the vote and the joint monitoring teams of Board monitors, party representatives and civil society agreed at the meeting of 11 March 2026. That practice should be placed on a permanent footing rather than repeated ad hoc. Security agencies should be more transparent about their election-day deployments, the NEBE should involve its regional branches in security risk assessments as a standing requirement, and the risk assessments and their mitigation plans should be shared with accredited observer groups in advance of each electoral stage.

The outstanding elections should be addressed through a published plan covering the 38 deferred constituencies of Tigray, the 8 constituencies of the Amhara region in which polling was suspended, the five contested constituencies of Humera, Adi Remets, Korem Afla, Telemt and Raya Alamata in which no registration took place. The plan should identify the affected constituencies and polling stations individually.

POLITICAL PARTIES AND CAMPAIGN ENVIRONMENT

For the Immediate Period

Political parties should publicly renounce and pledge not to use violence, intimidation, incitement, and hate speech, including through social media and digital platforms, and should take measures to educate their activists and supporters and to discipline members who act otherwise. Parties should specifically instruct their representatives that entering a secrecy booth with a voter, directing a voter's choice, or pressing officials during a count is a violation of the Code of Conduct they have signed.

Political parties should deploy accredited agents to registration stations as well as to polling stations. The presence of party agents at only 14 % of observed registration stations left the process substantially unwitnessed by the actors with the strongest standing to contest it, and materially weakened parties' subsequent ability to substantiate complaints.

The Joint Council of Ethiopian Political Parties should be strengthened at all levels and used in future elections to facilitate forums for dialogue and conflict resolution, building on the tripartite capacity-building program established in July 2025.

For the Longer Term

Federal and regional authorities should ensure that political parties certified by the NEBE are able to hold their founding and general assemblies without obstruction, and should investigate the obstruction of the assemblies of the Kontoma People's Democratic Party, the Denta People's Democratic Party, Balderas for True Democracy, Gogot for Guraghe Unity and Justice, and the Enat Party, in each case notwithstanding the Board's advance notification to the relevant authorities.

Political parties should make concerted efforts to improve the participation of women, young people, and other marginalized populations in their ranks and leadership positions, including but not limited to fulfilling the criteria that attract the governmental subsidy for parties registering a minimum %age of women candidates or women in leadership.

In order to build their support bases and enable voters to make informed choices, parties and candidates should participate in debates when opportunities arise. Political parties should be encouraged to publicise their platforms and programs and to review them so as to incorporate the perspectives of women, young people, and other marginalised populations on public policy. They should increase their outreach capacities and make full use of indirect state subsidies such as free airtime and newspaper columns.

INCLUSION

Inclusion of Women

Federal and regional authorities, the NEBE, gender equality and women's rights organizations, and all other stakeholders should take measures that foster greater participation of diverse groups of women, including women from marginalized populations, in Ethiopia's political processes, leadership, and decision-making. This could include, among other measures, a discussion of legislated gender quotas at federal, regional, or party level.

The NEBE should set and publish targets for the appointment of women as heads of registration and polling stations, since women's presence among ordinary election officers was substantial while their presence in station leadership remained at roughly a quarter across both registration modalities and on election day.

Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities

The election administration, political parties, and other relevant bodies should continue to work toward the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all aspects of the electoral process. Persons with disabilities should have unobstructed and independent physical access to voter registration as well as to polling locations. The disparity documented in this report, between 94 % of polling stations assessed as accessible and 88 % of manual registration stations assessed as inaccessible

without assistance, should be closed by applying the polling-day accessibility standard to registration stations.

Voter information should be available in Braille and sign language translation should be widely available for voters with visual and hearing impairments, and training materials in accessible formats should be delivered to accredited voter-education organizations before, rather than during, their outreach. The NEBE should enforce the requirement that assisted registrants' information be read aloud, which was observed at fewer than half of registration stations.

The NEBE should introduce specialized voting equipment so that voters with disabilities can cast their ballots independently and with dignity. This should include tactile ballot guides, ballot papers and voter information in Braille, magnifiers at the secrecy booth, and seating and low-level writing surfaces for voters who cannot stand, procure and distribute as standard polling-station equipment rather than on request. The requirement that assisted registrants' information be read aloud, observed at only 46 % of manual and 37 % of tablet registration stations, should be enforced as part of the same package, since independent voting and verified assisted registration are two halves of the same entitlement.

The NEBE should record disability status as a structured data field, with an explicit non-disclosure option, in its candidate, election officer, and observer datasets, so that the participation of persons with disabilities can be measured rather than inferred from the absence of a record.

Inclusion of Ethno-linguistic Minorities

The NEBE and civil society should develop outreach and communication strategies adapted to ethno-linguistic minority communities, to ensure the wide diffusion of voter information and education in rural communities and particularly in especially diverse areas.

Inclusion of Young People

In order to facilitate the participation of young voters, the NEBE could consider establishing special polling stations for university students, and should build on the amendment determining age eligibility by reference to polling day, which opened the process to citizens turning 18 by election day and to candidates turning 21.

Federal and regional authorities, the NEBE, political parties, and civil society organizations should make concerted outreach efforts to young people to encourage their engagement in electoral and political processes, and should incorporate and address their concerns and viewpoints.

CIVIL SOCIETY, CITIZEN ELECTION OBSERVATION AND VOTER EDUCATION

For the Immediate Period

As regulatory frameworks continue to evolve, ongoing dialogue between civil society, legal experts, and international partners can play a helpful role in supporting stable, predictable, and supportive civic environments.

Voter education activities should commence well in advance of the voter registration process and should use a wider range of media and languages. The finding that 45% of pre-election reports recorded no voter education at all in the observer's area, and that content on the mechanics of voting and on complaint procedures was the weakest covered, indicates where that effort should be concentrated.

Voter education should be linked directly to registration awareness, and funded accordingly. The coerced registration documented in this report, in which officers required citizens to take cards for absent family members or told residents that every person over 18 was obliged to take one, is in part a consequence of citizens not knowing that registration is a right rather than an obligation and that a voter card need not be surrendered or displayed to anyone.

Because voter education is a mandate of the NEBE and may be delivered only by organizations it accredits, the remedy runs through the accreditation system: the Board should require accredited providers to cover the voluntariness of registration, the custody of the voter card and the complaint route explicitly, and government and development partners should increase the funding available to accredited providers so that the finding that 45 % of observer reports recorded no voter education at all in the area is not repeated. Funding should be committed before the accreditation window opens, since providers cannot recruit and deploy against a commitment made after registration has begun.

For the Longer Term

Civil society voter education initiatives should be enhanced for marginalized communities, including those living in remote or conflict-affected areas, and voter education providers should be equipped and accredited early enough to reach those communities before registration opens rather than during it.

Citizen observation groups should extend systematic observation to the voter registration phase and to the post-election dispute-resolution process, both of which were substantially less observed than election day in this cycle, and should record disability-disaggregated data on their own deployments.

Citizen observation groups should develop a dedicated methodology for detecting and recording violence against women in elections.

The international community should recalibrate its efforts to build the capacity of Ethiopian civil society, whose election-related capacity remains uneven and which faces a sharply contracted assistance environment following the donor retrenchment of 2025. Assistance should be rendered well in advance of the start of the electoral process rather than during it, since observation and voter education require recruitment, training, and accreditation cycles that cannot be compressed.

INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT

For the Immediate Period

Free airtime should be allocated for civic and voter education, alongside the free airtime allocated to political parties. The allocation to parties, made across 50 media outlets by public lottery in this cycle, worked and should be continued and protected in law. A parallel allocation should be established for the NEBE and its accredited voter-education providers, distributed under the same joint committee and the same published formula, and weighted toward broadcasts in local languages, in sign language and at times when rural audiences listen. The gap this allocation is intended to close is the one recorded in the finding that voter education was absent from the observer's area in 45 % of reports and was delivered only in the federal working language in 9 %.

For the Longer Term

The Ethiopian Media Authority should increase its media monitoring capacity and coordinate with the NEBE both to foster the exchange of information and to disseminate traditional, online, and social media monitoring reports during the electoral period.

Civil society organizations, the NEBE, and governmental authorities should enhance their capacities to monitor social media and other digital platforms in order to identify and counter disinformation, and misinformation, while ensuring respect for privacy rights and freedom of expression. Longer-term civic education concerning media literacy and the responsibilities attaching to information integrity should also be addressed, and political and civil society stakeholders should consider obtaining status for their social media pages so that voters can more easily identify trusted sources.