

# **GUIDELINES FOR INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVERS AND FOREIGN MEDIA 2025**

In pursuance of the provisions of Article 91C of the Representation of the People Order, 1972 (P.O. No. 155 of 1972), Bangladesh Election Commission is pleased to make and promulgate the following Guidelines for International Election Observers and Foreign Media-

## **Chapter-I Preliminary**

**1.1 Short Title-** These guidelines may be called the Guidelines for International Election Observers and Foreign Media

**1.2 Commencement-** It shall come into force at once.

### **1.3. Definitions:**

In these guidelines, unless there is

anything repugnant in the subject or context, the following terms and definitions shall apply:

- a. **“Constitution”** means Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh;
- b. **“Commission”** means the Bangladesh Election Commission within the meaning of the Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh;
- c. **“Electoral process”** means all aspects of the election process including preelection, election and post-election period both at the Commission headquarter and at the constituencies.
- d. **“International Election Observer”** or **“Observer Organisation”** means a foreign national or an organisation permitted in writing by the Commission or by any person authorized by the Commission to observe the process of conduct of election under the Representation of the People Order, 1972 or any other Act conducted by Bangladesh Election Commission;
- e. **“EC Secretariat”** means Bangladesh Election Commission Secretariat as set

up under section 3 of the Election Commission Secretariat Act, 2009;

- f. **“Order”** means Representation of the People Order, 1972.

## **Chapter-II**

### **International Election Observer or Observer Organization**

#### **2.1. General Information:**

2.1.1 No person shall be allowed to observe the process of conduct of election if he/she is not accredited as an observer by the Commission

2.1.2 Article 91C of the Representation of the People Order, 1972 lays down the provisions regarding observations of parliamentary election by national or foreign observers. Election observers shall follow the provisions of Article 91C\* of the Order. For quick reference and better understanding of the relevant legal provisions, Article 91C of the said Order has been reproduced as follows:

[\*91C. (1) The Commission may permit in writing any person, whether national or

foreign, as an election observer who is in no way associated with or affiliated to, any political party or contesting candidate and who is not known for his sympathy, direct or indirect, for any particular political ideology, creed or cause or for any manifesto, program, aims or object of any political party or contesting candidate.

(2) An election observer may, in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Commission, observe any poll by staying, nearabout any polling station or entering into, with the permission of the Presiding Officer, any polling booth or polling station or by being present at the counting of votes or consolidation of the results of the count.

(3) No election observer shall be allowed to observe the poll as aforesaid, unless he displays the permit of the Commission bearing his name, nationality and photograph attested by the Commission.

(4) An election observer may be asked by any Returning Officer or Presiding Officer to leave any constituency or polling station, if he is found indulging in any activities not befitting any neutral election observer or interfering with the polling process or with

the work of the election authorities in any manner.

(5) Any action taken under clause (4) shall be reported to the Commission forthwith.

(6) An election observer may submit a report to the Commission or the Returning Officer on his observation about the fairness or otherwise of the poll, discipline and situation inside and outside the polling station, counting of votes, consolidation of the results of the count, compliance with the provisions of this Order or the rules or the Code of Conduct, or on any other matter relating to election

(7) Notwithstanding anything contained in this Order, the Commission or the Returning Officer, as the case may be, may consider the report of an election observer along with any other report submitted or sent to it or him under this Order at the time of taking any decision under any provision of this Order in respect of any matter on which the report of the observer has any bearing]

## **2.2. Relevant Laws and Rules Applicable to Election Observations:**

**2.2.1** The following laws and rules related to parliamentary election might be useful in case of election observations-

- a) The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (Article 118-126)
- b) The Representation of the People Order, 1972
- c) The Conduct of Election Rules, 2008
- d) The Code of Conduct for Political Parties and Candidates, 2008
- e) The Election Officials (Special Provisions) Act, 1991
- f) Election Observations Policy, 2025 (For Local Observers)
- g) The Delimitation of Constituencies Act, 2021
- h) Registration of Political Party Rules, 2008
- i) Electoral Rolls Act, 2009
- j) Electoral Rolls Rules, 2012

### **2.3. Call for Observation:**

The Commission may publish a notice, calling applications from International Election Observer or Observer Organisation in the format given in

**Annexure-A**, providing at least 30 (Thirty) days of timeframe for such application. The notification for application will be published online on the website of the Commission.

## **2.4. Eligibility:**

Each applicant, individual or organisation, should meet the following requirements for accreditation:

- a. Applicant, individual or organisation, should have a working experience of good governance, election, democracy, peace building and human rights;
- b. Applicant organisation should produce evidence of registration with the relevant authority of its own country;
- c. Applicant, individual or organisation, shall comply with the election laws of Bangladesh;
- d. No application for accreditation as an observer by a person who has been convicted of any electoral offence or any other offence involving fraudulence or dishonesty will be considered by the Commission.

## **2.5. Submission of Required Documents:**

2.5.1 International Election Observer shall

submit the following documents along with the application for accreditation:

- a. Curriculum Vitae along with the proof of relevant working experience;
- b. A copy of the valid passport;
- c. Duly signed Declaration and Pledge in the format given in **Annexure-B**

2.5.2 The application form submitted must have a cover page on the observer organisation's letter head with a listing of the name of each observer and his/her nationality in the sequence in which the completed forms are enclosed.

2.5.3 International Election Observers may hire services of Bangladeshi interpreters, if required. However, they shall provide all necessary details of these interpreters while applying for accreditation card. These interpreters also need to undergo the due process of accreditation.

## **2.6 Accreditation Procedure for International Election Observer or Observer Organisation:**

The following procedures shall be followed for accreditation of the International Election Observers:

- a) International election observer or such organisation intending to observe any election shall apply to the Commission in the prescribed form in Annexure-A to these Guidelines.
- b) Filled out form may be sent to the Commission through e-mail: [secretary@ecs.gov.bd](mailto:secretary@ecs.gov.bd) or by fax +880255007515.
- c) Observer Organisation may also forward the application directly to the Commission through their diplomatic mission based in Bangladesh.
- d) Application for accreditation must be submitted within 30 (Thirty) days of notification/call for application.
- e) Received applications shall be scrutinised by the EC Secretariat. The EC Secretariat, if thinks require, may ask the Public Security Division, Ministry of Home Affairs of Bangladesh to verify any applications.
- f) The EC Secretariat shall send the scrutinised applications to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for issuing visa. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs shall not

regret any visa application, without informing the EC along with any valid reason. However, final decision shall be taken by the EC.

## **2.7 Issuance of Accreditation Card and Relevant Issues:**

- a) EC Secretariat will issue accreditation card along with vehicle sticker to each international observer on the basis of decisions of the Commission.
- b) International Election Observer will collect accreditation card and vehicle sticker from the EC Secretariat between 7-1 days before the election.
- c) The election observer should always carry the accreditation card while he/she is performing his/her functions/duties as an election observer.
- d) After receiving the accreditation from the Commission, the Observer Organisation shall submit the following additional documents to the EC Secretariat:
  - i) Authorisation Form for the Contact Person as per the format given in Annexure-C,
  - ii) Observer's Information and Deployment

Details in the format given in Annexure-D,

- e) EC Secretariat might provide a copy of the election manual to election observers.
- f) EC Secretariat might arrange briefing or orientation for election observers about electoral process and electoral laws of Bangladesh.

## **2.8 Responsibilities of International Election Observers:**

The responsibilities of International Election Observers shall be as follows:

- 2.8.1 International Election Observers have to submit election observation reports within 30 (thirty) days from the date of the polling day by email or hard copy addressing the Secretary of the EC Secretariat. The reports should be prepared based on the information of pre-poll, poll-day and post-poll observations.
- 2.8.2 Every election observer or, as the case may be, organisation may submit a report to the Commission highlighting the electoral irregularities which were noticed during observation relating to

conduct of election with recommendations, if any.

2.8.3 International Election Observers shall ensure that their observations and reporting are impartial, objective and depict the highest standards of accuracy.

2.8.4 Every observer organisation can nominate only one person during counting of votes or consolidating of results.

2.8.5 No election observer shall engage in any illegal or corrupt practices in the electoral process as defined in the Order.

2.8.6 International Election Observers shall not conduct or participate in any activity that may generate an impression of favouring or opposing any political party or a candidate.

2.8.7 International Election Observers will not obstruct directly or indirectly in any pre-election, election and post-election process.

2.8.8 As far as practicable, the guidelines applicable to local election observers shall also be followed by an International Election Observer and Observer Organisation.

## **2.9 Conduct of Observers**

Observers shall abide by the followings

during their observation:

- 2.9.1 To comply with the Constitution, election-related laws and regulations in order to assist in the conduct of elections in a democratic system.
- 2.9.2 To refrain from interfering in the work of election-related officials.
- 2.9.3 To refrain from touching or removing any election materials.
- 2.9.4 To maintain complete impartiality or neutrality during the observation and not to display any behavior that would identify an observer as a member of a political party or supporter of a candidate.
- 2.9.5 To refrain from wearing, carrying or displaying anything that bears the identification or symbol of a candidate or a political party for or against the election.
- 2.9.6 To refrain from accepting or attempting to buy, accepting or encouraging the acceptance of any gift from any political party, candidate or their agent, any organisation or person involved in the election.
- 2.9.7 During the election, observers shall not make any comments to the media that may disrupt or influence the election process.

## **2.10 Rights of the international observers**

2.10.1 Have the right to enter any polling station any time during elections.

2.10.2 Can stay at a polling station as long as they want. **subject to any such restriction as may be imposed by the Presiding Officer.** However, they shall not be allowed to stay within a polling booth for long.

## **Chapter-III Foreign Media**

### **3.1. Accreditation and Relevant Information for Foreign Media:**

3.1.1 The Foreign Media intending to cover and report the election related news shall follow the same accreditation procedures for accreditation as far as practicable as in the case of the international election observers.

3.1.2 The accredited foreign journalists will be granted 'J' category visa following the same procedures as in the case of International Election Observers. The validity of visa shall follow the existing Visa Policy of Bangladesh Government.

3.1.3 Ministry of Information and Broadcasting will open a Media

Center with all modern facilities for transmitting news and messages by the foreign journalists.

3.1.4 Upon arrival at the airport, the Airport Help Desk will arrange to establish their contact with the Media Centre which will coordinate with the EC Secretariat for providing them with accreditation cards and stickers for vehicles and other necessary documents.

3.1.5 Policies regarding reporting and coverage of election related news by Domestic Mass-media, 2025 issued by the Commission will be, as far as practicable, applicable to foreign media outlets and foreign journalists.

## **Chapter-IV**

### **Code of Conduct**

4.1. Code of Conduct for International Election Observers and Foreign Media:

4.1.1 Any person observing or reporting the electoral process as an individual or as a member of an Observer Organisation or Foreign Media must read, understand and adhere to this Code of Conduct and shall sign a

declaration and pledge as described in the ANNEXURE-B to these Guidelines.

- 4.1.2 In order to provide an impartial and accurate assessment of the nature of election process and for ensuring the integrity of international election observation, international election observers and foreign media shall-
- a. Respect sovereignty of the country and international human rights;
  - b. Respect the laws of the country and the authority of electoral bodies;
  - c. Respect the integrity of the international election observation mission;
  - d. Maintain strict political impartiality;
  - e. Provide appropriate identification;
  - f. Maintain accuracy of the observations and professionalism in drawing conclusions;
  - g. Refrain from making comments to the public or the media before the mission speaks;
  - h. Cooperate with other election observers;
  - i. Maintain proper personal behavior;
  - j. Always display accreditation cards provided by Bangladesh Election Commission Secretariat;
  - k. Meet the presiding officer first in the polling station;

- l. Follow the lawful directions of the presiding officer;
- m. While counting votes, only one observer of each observer mission can be present in the counting room;
- n. Must not enter the place reserved for marking ballot papers;
- o. Must not obstruct election processes;
- p. Should avoid live telecast/air or live on Facebook/X or any other social media in a polling center;
- q. Every observer in the election observation mission must sign a pledge to follow it.

#### **4.2. Violation of Code of Conduct:**

4.2.1. In case of violation of this Code of Conduct and Declaration and Pledge, the Commission reserves the right to cancel or withdraw the accreditation of an individual observer or Observer Organisation or foreign media. The authority to determine the violation also rests with the Election Commission of Bangladesh.

## **Chapter-V**

### **Miscellaneous**

#### **5.1 Grant of Visa:**

- 5.1.1 Accredited international election observers shall obtain prior visas from the concerned Bangladesh Missions abroad. In exceptional cases, Visa on Arrival may be issued subject to prior clearance from the Security Services Division, Ministry of Home Affairs of Bangladesh.
- 5.1.2 Application (along with a copy of the valid passport) for prior concurrence for Visa on Arrival shall be submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh through the concerned Bangladesh Mission abroad.
- 5.1.3 Ministry of Foreign Affairs will facilitate International Election Observers and Foreign Media personnel in getting visas from Bangladesh Missions abroad.
- 5.1.4 International election observers will be granted 'T' category visa. The validity of visa shall follow the existing Visa Policy of Bangladesh Government.
- 5.1.5 No International Election Observer or foreign media person shall stay

in Bangladesh beyond the duration of granted visa.

- 5.1.6 Immigration officials at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, Dhaka would mark the 'Election Observer' seal on the passports of the observers.

## **5.2. Airport Help Desk:**

- 5.2.1 An Airport Help Desk would be set up at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport by Airport Immigration Authority 10 (ten) days prior to the actual date of polling for reception and assistance to incoming International Election Observers and foreign journalists.

## **5.3. Security**

- 5.3.1 Observer Organisation will provide the list of observers and the places of their deployment as in the format given in **Annexure-D**. EC Secretariat will send this list to the Ministry of Home Affairs and Returning Officer concerned for necessary support and security of election observers.
- 5.3.2 Public Security Division of the Ministry of Home Affairs will instruct the concerned Deputy Commissioners and Superintendents of Police concerned to

provide necessary security to the International Election Observers and foreign journalists during their visits to different polling stations of the country.

- 5.3.3 The concerned diplomatic missions or sponsoring organisations of the International Election Observers and foreign journalists, as applicable, must provide their itinerary of visits well ahead to the Public Security Division of the Ministry of Home Affairs for ensuring required services.

#### **5.4 Import or Carriage of Equipment and Materials by International Election Observer:**

- 5.4.1 International Election Observers may temporarily import or carry necessary equipment and materials relating to election observation subject to the customs law of Bangladesh. National Board of Revenue (NBR) will facilitate International Election Observers regarding carriage or import of equipment and materials relating to their Election Observation.

- 5.4.2 In order to enjoy the benefits of customs duty exemption, if entitled, International Election Observer or

such organisation should apply to the National Board of Revenue (NBR) through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with required documents including the name of the observer, copy of the valid passport, particulars of the equipment and materials, and name of the carrier or importer concerned. These equipment and materials shall only be used for the purposes of election observation.

- 5.4.3 International Election Observer may get these equipment and materials returned with them to their home country.

## **5.5 Repeal of previous Guidelines:**

Upon commencement of these guidelines, the Guidelines for Election Observation (For International Observers), 2023 is hereby repealed.