

Decree-Law No. (23) of 2025
Concerning the Election of Local Authority Councils
As Amended by Decree-Law No (1) of 2026 and Decree-Law No () of 2026

The President of the State of Palestine

The Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO)

Pursuant to the [Basic Law of the PLO](#),

and to the provisions of the Amended Basic Law of 2003 and its amendments,

Having reviewed the Law Concerning the Election of Local Authority Councils No. (10) of 2005 and its amendments,

and the Law Concerning Palestinian Local Authorities No. (1) of 1997 and its amendments,

and the draft decree-law submitted by the Council of Ministers on 05/08/2025,

In accordance with the powers vested in us,

In achievement of public interest,

We promulgate the following Decree-Law:

Article (1)

The following words and expressions shall have the meanings assigned below, except when evidence indicates otherwise:

- **The Commission:** The Central Elections Commission (CEC).
- **Local Authority:** A unit of local government within a specified geographic and administrative scope.
- **Council:** The Local Authority Council, including a Municipal Council or a Village Council.
- **Chairperson:** Chair of the Local Authority Council.
- **Preliminary Voters List:** The list prepared by the Commission containing the names and data of voters, which is prepared and published for objections.
- **Final Voters List:** The voters list prepared by the Commission for polling purposes after deciding on all objections and challenges submitted against the Preliminary List.
- **Resident:** A Palestinian residing within the boundaries of a Local Authority, having a specific residential address therein.
- **Competent Court:** The Court for Election Cases, formed in accordance with this decree-law.
- **The Open List:** A form of a list in the Proportional Representation System under which a voter is able to influence the order of a list's candidates by being granted the right to vote for one or more candidates from the list for which he/she has voted.
- **Voter:** Every person whose name is listed in the Final Voters List.
- **Candidate:** Every person whose nomination for election has been accepted in accordance with the provisions of this Decree-Law.
- **The List:** The electoral list that includes the names of the candidates for municipal council elections in accordance with the provisions of this Decree Law.
- **List Representative:** The person authorised by the List to sign on its behalf and submit and follow up on requests and necessary documents during the electoral process, and represent it before the Commission and relevant bodies.
- **Agent:** The person who represents a List or a village council candidate and is accredited by the CEC to monitor the electoral process.
- **Observation Body:** Entities accredited by the Commission to observe the electoral process.

- **The Observer:** The person who is nominated by an observation body to represent it in observing the electoral process and is accredited by the CEC.
- **Journalist:** Every person working in the media and accredited by the Commission to follow and cover the conduct of the electoral process.
- **Polling Centre:** The location voters go to cast their votes, containing several polling stations.
- **Polling Station:** The location where the ballot box, ballot papers, and the polling staff are located.
- **Majority of Council Members:** More than half of the total number of Council members. If a fraction results, it shall be rounded up to the higher whole number.
- **Two-Thirds Majority of Council Members:** Two-thirds of the total number of Council members. If a fraction results, it shall be rounded up to the higher whole number.
- **The Sainte-Laguë Method:** A mathematical method for distributing seats in a Proportional Representation System, based on dividing the valid votes for the lists by odd numbers. The resulting quotients are then arranged in descending order, whereby seats are awarded based on the highest resulting numbers.
- **Electoral Materials:** All materials provided by the Commission for the conduct of the elections, the tampering with which would affect the integrity and progress of the electoral process.

Article (2) Right to Vote

1. Elections shall be conducted in a free, direct, secret, and in-person manner, and voting by proxy shall not be permitted.
2. The right to vote shall be exercised, pursuant to the provisions of this Decree-Law, by every person who meets the following conditions:
 - a. To be Palestinian.
 - b. To have completed eighteen years of age on polling day.
 - c. To have been resident within the boundaries of the Local Authority for a period not less than six months prior to the date of conducting the elections. The Commission shall verify the validity of this residence and request what is necessary for its confirmation.
 - d. His/her name must be included in the Final Voters List for the Local Authority where he/she shall exercise the right to vote.
 - e. Not to have lost his/her legal capacity by virtue of a judicial ruling.

Article (3) Schedule

1. Local elections shall be held in all Local Authority Councils every four years. The Council of Ministers shall issue a decision to set the date for holding the elections.
2. In the event that holding elections for all Councils in one phase is unfeasible, the Council of Ministers may issue a decision to conduct the elections in phases within three months, as dictated by the public interest, and in coordination with the Commission.
3. The term of the elected Council shall be four years from the date of conducting the elections.
4. The Commission may request the postponement of the election date in one or more Councils for no more than four weeks if required by technical necessities and the safety of elections. The decision for postponement shall be issued by the Council of Ministers.
5. If there is a legal obligation to hold elections in one or more Local Councils outside the specified date for holding elections, the term of the elected Council shall be the remaining period of the

previous Council's term if that period is more than one year. If it is less than one year, the Ministry of Local Government shall appoint a caretaker committee until elections are held.

6. The Council whose term has ended shall continue to manage the Council's affairs until elections are held and the elected Council assumes its duties.

Article (4)

Delimitation of Boundaries

1. The boundaries of the Local Authority shall be in accordance with the administrative boundaries approved by the applicable Law of Local Authorities. In the absence thereof, the boundaries shall be in accordance with what the Commission determines in coordination with the Ministry of Local Government.
2. No amendment to the boundaries of Local Authorities or the number of their members shall be introduced after the issuance of the call for elections of Local Authority Councils.

Article (5)

The Competent Court

1. The Competent Court shall be formed by a Presidential Decree based on a nomination from the High Judicial Council. It shall consist of a President from among the judges of the High Court/Court of Cassation, and fourteen members from among the judges of the Courts of Appeal and First Instance.
2. The Court shall have jurisdiction to examine appeals against the decisions of the Central Elections Commission and examine challenges to the election results.
3. The main seat of the Competent Court shall be in the city of Jerusalem, and it may have two subsidiary seats in the cities of Ramallah and Gaza. It shall be divided into four panels of three members each. Each panel shall convene in the presence of three of the Competent Court judges, presided over by the most senior among them. If seniority is equal, the panel shall be presided over by the longest-serving member. The President of the Competent Court may convene the Court in locations other than those mentioned in this paragraph. The geographical allocation of its panels shall be decided by the President of the Competent Court.
4. Applications and writs of appeal and challenges against the Commission's decisions shall not be accepted before the Competent Court unless signed by a practising lawyer. The Commission shall be represented before the Competent Court by a practising lawyer chosen by the Commission.
5. Applications for appeals and challenges shall be submitted to the Competent Court registry within the deadlines specified in this Decree-Law. A registry shall be dedicated to the Competent Court at each of its seats. The Competent Court shall decide on applications for appeals and challenges within the periods prescribed in this Decree-Law.
6. The Competent Court may not adjourn the proceedings nor postpone the issuance of the ruling, unless necessitated by the preservation of the right to defence or the public interest. The adjournment shall not exceed forty-eight (48) hours.
7. The jurisdiction of the Competent Court shall not include considering violations and electoral crimes stipulated in this Decree-Law, jurisdiction over which shall belong to the competent judiciary.
8. Appeals and electoral challenges submitted pursuant to this Decree-Law shall be exempt from fees.

Article (6)

Election Administration

1. In accordance with the provisions of this Decree-Law, the Commission shall be the body authorized to undertake the administration and supervision of elections and all necessary measures to ensure

their integrity and freedom. To achieve this, the Commission shall be entrusted with the following tasks and powers:

- a. Appoint staff to work in its offices, to work as registration and polling and counting staff, and supervise them.
 - b. Accredite journalists and observers and facilitate their work.
 - c. Determine registration and polling centres.
 - d. Prepare and update the Voters List.
 - e. Approve candidate nomination applications.
 - f. Manage the polling and counting process, announcement of electoral results, and issuance of certificates to the winners.
 - g. Exercise any powers entrusted to it in accordance with the provisions of this Decree-Law.
2. The Central Elections Office shall operate under the supervision of the Commission, and it shall be considered as its executive administration.
 3. The Commission shall have the powers assigned to it by the applicable General Elections Law.

Article (7) **Education Campaign**

The Commission shall organise awareness and civic education campaigns and issue publications and advertisements that highlight the importance of elections, encourage citizens to participate, and explain the conditions, requirements, and procedures for participation.

Article (8) **Neutrality**

The executive authority and its various institutions shall maintain neutrality in all stages of the electoral process.

Article (9) **Observation**

1. Agents and observers shall have the right to monitor/observe all stages of the electoral process, in accordance with the provisions of this Decree-Law and the regulations and instructions issued according to it.
2. The Commission shall establish the necessary procedures for the accreditation of agents and observers.
3. Local and international journalists shall have the right to monitor and cover all stages of the electoral process. The Commission shall establish the necessary procedures for the accreditation of journalists.
4. The Commission may accredit guests and grant them cards enabling them to enter electoral centres.

Article (10) **Right to Register**

1. Every person who meets the following conditions has the right to have his/her name included in the Voters List pertaining to the Local Authority Council where he/she resides:
 - a. To be Palestinian.
 - b. To have completed seventeen years of age.
 - c. To be resident in the Local Authority for a period not less than six months prior to the date of conducting the elections.
 - d. Not to have lost his/her legal capacity by virtue of a final judicial ruling.

2. For the purposes of this Decree-Law, a person is considered Palestinian if:
 - a. He/she was born in Palestine within its borders during the British Mandate era, or had the right to acquire Palestinian nationality pursuant to the laws prevailing during that era.
 - b. Or if he/she was born in the Gaza Strip or the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.
 - c. Or if one of his/her ancestors meets the condition of paragraph (a) of this subsection, regardless of the place of birth.
 - d. If he is the husband of a Palestinian woman or the wife of a Palestinian man as defined in paragraphs (a, b, and c) of this subsection.
 - e. Provided that he/she has not acquired Israeli citizenship.

Article (11)

Preparation of the Voters List

The Commission shall prepare the Final Voters List in all Local Authorities where elections will be held, not less than sixty days and not more than one hundred and twenty days before polling day.

Article (12) Voters list

1. The Commission shall open the registration period for five days to receive registration applications.
2. The Voters List shall include the following data:
 - a. Full quadruple name.
 - b. Sex.
 - c. Date of birth.
 - d. The specific address of residence.
 - e. Type and number of the personal identification document.

Article (13)

Objection to the Voters List

1. The Commission shall publish the Preliminary Voters List for a period of three days in a place easily accessible within the Local Authority. Anyone who is entitled to register in the Voters List may submit an objection regarding the non-inclusion of his/her name in the List, the correction of his/her information if it contains an error, or to object to the inclusion of another person's name if it was included in contrary to the law.
2. The Commission shall notify the person against whom the objection was made within two days from the date of submitting the objection application.
3. The person against whom the objection was made has the right to respond to the objection within three days from the date of notification.
4. The Commission shall issue its decisions on the objections submitted to it within three days from the expiry date of the period for responding to the objection.
5. The Commission's decisions shall be appealable before the Competent Court within three days from the date of notification. The Competent Court shall issue its decision on the appeal within five days from the date of its submission, and its decision shall be final.

Article (14)

System of Representation

Nomination for Municipal Councils shall be conducted through electoral lists based on proportional representation (open lists). For Village Councils, nomination shall be individual according to the plurality system.

Article (15)

Nomination for Municipal Councils

1. Lists wishing to participate in the elections shall be registered with the Commission according to the Commission's regulations, procedures, and instructions, under the name and logo chosen by the list for itself. Registration shall be made on the form approved by the Commission for this purpose, which shall include:
 - a. The name of the electoral list, the area, and the municipality for whose council it is running.
 - b. The name and address of the list's representative authorized to sign on its behalf.
 - c. The name and address of its campaign manager, responsible for all electoral campaigning activities of the list and its candidates.
 - d. The sources of funding for the electoral campaign, and [an undertaking] to provide the Commission with notice of any changes to those sources after the application is submitted.
 - e. The address of the list's headquarters, if any
2. The number of candidates in a single electoral list must not be less or more than the number of seats in the Municipal Council.
3. Representation of women in the list must not be less than:
 - a. Three women in Local Authorities with 11 seats.
 - b. Four women in Local Authorities with 13 or 15 seats.

Article (16)

Conditions for Accepting a List in Municipal Councils

The following is required to accept of an electoral list:

1. Submission of a statement with the names of the list's candidates, whose number is not less nor more than the number of seats allocated to the Municipal Council.
2. An affirmation from the list's candidates accepting nomination in the list, and their commitment to the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian People, its political and national program, and the relevant decisions of international legitimacy.
3. Compliance with the minimum requirement for women's representation in the list.
4. Submission of a copy of the list's electoral platform.
5. Deposit of one thousand Jordanian Dinars or its equivalent in legally circulated currency, non-refundable, to the Commission's account, refundable in cases of withdrawal or rejection of candidacy.
6. Deposit of one thousand Jordanian Dinars or its equivalent in legally circulated currency as insurance for the electoral campaign, refundable after the removal of all electoral campaign materials and submission of the financial report on the costs and sources of funding for the electoral campaign and its aspects of expenditure. An electoral list is prohibited from obtaining funding for its electoral campaign from the state or from any non-Palestinian source, whether this source is internal or external, or whether the funding was in cash or in kind, directly or indirectly.
7. Attachment of the logo or symbol identifying it, provided it is not a logo or symbol suggesting it belongs to the State of Palestine, is specific to another list, or is protected by law.

Article (17)

Representative of the List in Municipal Councils' Elections

1. Every list must authorize a representative to represent it in:
 - a. Submitting the list's nomination application and following up on the necessary applications and documents during the phases of the electoral process.
 - b. Representing the list before the Competent Court.

2. The representative of the list and its candidates shall bear responsibility for the accuracy and correctness of the list's data and all that is issued by the list during the stages of the electoral process.

Article (18)

Rejection of the List in Municipal Councils' Elections

1. The Commission shall reject the application for registration of a candidate or an electoral list if the application does not meet any of the conditions stipulated in Articles (15, 16, 21) of this Decree-Law.
2. The Commission shall reject the registration application of an electoral list of a partisan entity if it is found that it has previously registered an electoral list or participated in forming a list in the same capacity in the same Council.

Article (19)

Nomination in Village Councils

1. Candidates wishing to run for membership in Village Councils shall be registered according to the Commission's regulations and procedures and on the form prepared by the Commission for this purpose, attaching a declaration from the candidate that he/she commits to the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian People, its political and national program, and relevant decisions of international legitimacy.
2. A candidate for membership in Village Councils shall:
 - a. deposit one hundred Jordanian Dinars or its equivalent in legally circulated currency, non-refundable, to the Commission's account [but is], refundable in cases of withdrawal or rejection of candidacy.
 - b. deposit two hundred Jordanian Dinars or its equivalent in legally circulated currency as insurance for the electoral campaign, refundable in the event of removing electoral campaign materials and submitting the financial report on the costs and sources of funding for the electoral campaign and its aspects of expenditure. A candidate is prohibited from obtaining funding for his/her electoral campaign from the state or from any non-Palestinian source, whether this source is internal or external, or whether the funding was in cash or in kind, directly or indirectly.
 - c. Submit a copy of the electoral platform.

Article (20)

Representation of Women in Council Membership

The number of women in the membership of Local Authority Councils must not be less than the following:

1. Two seats in Local Authorities where the council is composed of 9 seats.
2. Three seats in Local Authorities where the council is composed of 11 seats.
3. Four seats in Local Authorities where the council is composed of 13 or 15 seats.

Article (21)

Conditions for Candidacy for Council Membership

1. A candidate must meet the following conditions:
 - a. To have completed twenty-three years of age on polling day.
 - b. His/her name must be included in the Final Voters List for the Local Authority for whose council membership he/she is nominated.
 - c. Not to have been convicted of a misdemeanour involving a breach to honour or trust, or a felony, unless rehabilitated.

- d. Not to be an employee or personnel in the Ministry of Local Government or any of the security forces, unless he/she has submitted his/her resignation and attached proof of its acceptance with the nomination application.
 - e. Not to be a chairperson, member, employee, personnel, or a lawyer for a Local Authority for whose council membership he/she is nominated, unless he/she has submitted his/her resignation and attached proof of its acceptance with the nomination application.
 - f. To have paid all fees, taxes, fines, and violations due from him/her to the Council.
2. It is prohibited for a person to nominate himself/herself in more than one list or for membership of more than one council.

Article (22)

Nomination Procedures, Rejection of a Candidate

1. The nomination period shall be opened for seven days according to the timeline issued by the Commission.
2. The nomination application shall be submitted according to the form prepared for that purpose by the Commission.
3. The Commission shall examine the nomination applications within three days from the date of closing the nomination [submission] period. Candidates for membership of Village Councils and lists in Municipal Councils where a flaw is found in their nomination application or that of any of their candidates shall be notified to rectify their status within three days from when being notified; otherwise, their nomination applications shall be rejected. Its decision shall be subject to appeal before the competent court within three days from the date of notification of the decision. The Court shall issue its decision on the appeal within five days from the date of its submission, and its decision shall be final.

Article (23)

1. The Commission shall issue a certificate to each candidate for membership of Village Councils and to each list nominated for membership of Municipal Councils, including the time and date of submitting the nomination application and its number.
2. The names of candidates for Village Councils and the names of lists with their candidates shall appear on the ballot paper ordered according to the date and time of registration with the Commission.

Article (24)

Withdrawal from Nomination

1. Any candidate of electoral lists, through the list representative, may request withdrawal of his/her nomination by written notice to the Commission before the end of the legal period for submitting nomination applications.
2. The list has the right to fill the place of the withdrawn candidate before the end of the rectification period.
3. The list shall be cancelled if more than a third of its candidates withdraw from it, and it was not able to rectify its status within the legal period.
4. Electoral lists or candidates for Village Councils may not withdraw their nomination after the Commission publishes the final list of names of lists and candidates.

Article (25)**Publication of Electoral Lists and Names of Candidates**

1. The names of candidates for Village Councils and the names of electoral lists with their candidates in municipalities shall be published, at least thirty-four days before polling day.
2. Any person may submit a written objection to the Commission against candidates for Village Councils or against a list or any of its candidates within three days from the date of publication, stating the reasons for his/her objection and attaching the evidence supporting his/her objection.

Article (26)

1. The candidate for the Village Council objected to, or the representative of the list objected to, or objected against any of its candidates, shall be notified with a copy of the objection application and its attachments within (48) hours from the date of its submission.
2. The candidate for the Village Council objected to, or the list objected to, or objected against any of its candidates, may respond to the objection within three days from the date of being notified of the objection.
3. The Commission shall issue its decision on the objections submitted to it within three days from the expiry of the period for responding to the objection.
4. The Commission's decision shall be appealable before the Competent Court within three days from the date of notification of the decision.
5. The Competent Court shall issue its decision on the appeal within five days from the date of its submission, and its decision shall be final.

Article (27)**Electoral Campaign**

The period for the electoral campaign shall be fourteen days ending twenty-four hours prior to polling.

Article (28)

1. Lists or their candidates and candidates for Village Councils may organise various activities to explain their electoral platform to the electorate, provided they do not conflict with applicable legislation.
2. Candidates for Village Councils and the representative of the electoral list and its candidates shall bear responsibility for the activities and materials of the electoral campaign issued by them.
3. Lists and candidates must remove all electoral campaign materials within a period not exceeding three months after polling day.
4. In the event of non-compliance by the list and candidates with the removal of electoral campaign materials, the Commission may remove them and deduct the costs of removal from the electoral campaign insurance deposit.

Article (29)

The following shall be observed in the electoral campaign:

1. Not conducting electoral campaign activities in places of worship or near hospitals, or in buildings and premises occupied by government departments or public institutions.
2. Not using private places for electoral campaign purposes without the consent of the owners of these places.

3. Not using government vehicles, supplies, and government or public logos emblems in the electoral campaign.
4. The electoral campaign must not include any incitement, racist discourse, hatred, or defamation of any lists or candidates.
5. Not funding the electoral campaign from the state or from any non-Palestinian source, whether this source is internal or external, and whether the funding was cash or in kind, directly or indirectly.

Article (30)

Official media outlets shall provide equal free opportunities for the electoral campaign for candidates and lists in coordination with the Commission.

Article (31)

The Commission shall refer anyone who violates the provisions of the electoral campaign stipulated in this Decree-Law to the Public Prosecution.

Article (32)

1. Every candidate for membership of Village Councils and every list that participated in the Municipal Council elections must submit, within one month from the date of announcing the final results, a detailed financial statement showing the costs of the electoral campaign, its sources of funding, and aspects of expenditure.
2. The Commission may request that the financial statements be audited by a certified auditor or by submitting a legal declaration to that effect. It shall enable those who have [legal] interest to view them.
3. The CEC shall set instructions to determine the ceiling on election campaign spending, taking into account the size of the local authority, the number of voters, and the cost of living.

Article (33)

Amounts of the electoral campaign insurance deposit for candidates and lists shall be refunded upon removal of all manifestations of their electoral campaign within three months from polling day and submission of the financial statement stipulated in Article (32) of this Decree-Law.

Article (34)

Ballot Papers

Ballot papers must contain the following data:

- a. The name of the Local Authority where polling takes place.
- b. The names of the lists [running] for membership of Municipal Councils, their electoral logo or symbol, and the names of their candidates.
- c. The names of the candidates for membership of Village Councils and their nicknames, if any.
- d. A square box next to the name of each candidate for membership of Village Councils, next to the list nominated for membership of Municipalities, and next to the name of each candidate within the list, for marking a sign clearly indicating the voter's choice according to the Commission's procedures.

Article (35)

The Commission shall supply polling stations with the necessary materials for polling and counting, including voter lists, ballot boxes, and a number of ballot papers equal to the number of registered voters at the station, in addition to a number of reserve ballot papers as estimated by the Commission.

Article (36)

1. A copy of the Voters List shall be posted in a visible place at the polling centre for voters' review.
2. The names of candidates for Village Councils and the names of lists and their candidates shall be posted in a visible place at the polling centre for voters' review.

Article (37)**Agents of Electoral Lists and Candidates, and Observers**

Agents of lists and candidates, and observers, may be present inside the polling station. No more than one agent for a list or candidate, or an observer for an observation body, shall be present in the station at any one time.

Article (38)**Polling Day**

1. Before commencing the polling process, the head of the polling station or the person acting in his/her place shall open the ballot box in front of the agents and observers to ensure it is empty, then re-seals it with the special seal. Re-opening it shall not be permitted except upon commencement of the counting process.
2. The head of the polling station shall organise a protocol showing the number of ballot papers delivered to the station, the number of registered voters in the List, and the date and time of opening the poll, signed by the polling station staff and the agents and observers present.

Article (39)

- a. Polling shall begin at seven o'clock in the morning and end at seven o'clock in the evening of the day designated for polling, taking into account cases of extension decided by the Commission in certain authorities, or centres and stations if technical necessities and the safety of elections so require. Polling shall proceed according to the following procedures:
 1. The head of the polling station or a member of the station staff acting on his/her behalf shall verify the identity of the voter and the inclusion of his/her name in the specific Voters List for the station and shall mark it.
 2. The head of the polling station or a member of the station staff acting on his/her behalf shall hand the voter a ballot paper stamped with the Commission's seal.
 3. The voter shall proceed with the ballot paper to the designated place that ensures secrecy and shall mark [the ballot with]:
 - a. One list [running] for membership of Municipal Councils, and is allowed to mark next to five candidates or fewer within the list itself.
 - b. Five candidates or fewer in Village Councils.
 4. The voter shall place the ballot paper in the designated [ballot] box.
 5. If the voter makes a mistake while marking the ballot paper, he/she shall hand it back to the head of the polling station, who shall place it in a special envelope after marking it as cancelled, and shall give him/her a new ballot paper.
 6. The Commission may regulate the polling of police and members of security forces in certain Local Authorities according to a regulation set by the Commission that includes controls and standards which ensure the integrity and secrecy of the electoral process.

Article (40)

1. If the voter is illiterate, he/she may seek assistance from a person of his/her choice to help him/her mark the ballot paper according to the controls established by the Commission to ensure non-exploitation of their vote.

2. If the voter has a disability preventing him/her from marking the ballot paper, the Commission shall take all necessary measures to enable him/her to vote. He/she may seek assistance from a person of his/her choice to help him/her mark the ballot paper according to the controls established by the Commission to ensure non-exploitation of his/her vote.

Article (41)

Polling shall close at the end of the specified time, allowing voters present inside the Centre to vote.

Article (42)

The head of the polling station shall organise a protocol showing the number of voters in the Voters List, the number of voters who cast ballots, the number of unused ballot papers, and cancelled [and replaced] ballot papers, attached with any complaints submitted by agents of lists and/or candidates or observations received from observers.

Article (43)

The process of counting ballot papers shall begin at the polling location within one hour of closing the ballot boxes, in the presence of the station staff, agents, and observers, and shall conclude within a period not exceeding twelve hours from the start of the count.

Article (44)

Counting of Ballot Papers

1. The station staff shall begin by opening the box, taking out the ballot papers, and counting them, ensuring that the number of papers extracted from the [ballot] box matches the number of voters who cast ballots.
2. The station staff shall read aloud the name of an elected list and the names of the candidates within the list marked next to them, and reading the names of the candidates marked next to them for Village Councils, and recording this.
3. Agents and observers have the right to view the ballot paper read aloud.
4. Complaints and objections may be submitted by lists or their candidates or agents of lists and candidates during the counting process.

Article (45)

A ballot paper shall be deemed invalid in the following cases:

- a. If it is not one of the ballot papers issued by the Commission.
- b. If it is not stamped with the Commission's seal.
- c. If it is signed by the voter or marked with any distinguishing sign or any other sign approved by the Commission.
- d. If marked in a way that makes it difficult to determine the choice of the voter.
- e. If marked, on the Municipal Council ballot paper, for more than one list, or if marked for candidates from more than one list.
- f. If marked for more than five candidates from the candidates of the list.
- g. If marked for more than five candidates in Village Councils.

Article (46)

1. After the completion of the counting process, the number of ballot papers, including invalid and blank papers, must be matched with the number of voters who cast ballots in the Voters Register.

2. The polling station staff shall organise a protocol showing the name of the Local Authority, the date and time of counting, the number of ballot papers found and extracted from the box, the number of votes obtained by each list nominated for the Municipal Council elections, the number of votes obtained by each candidate within the list, the number of votes obtained by candidates for Village Councils, the number of invalid ballot papers, the number of registered voters at the station, the number of ballot papers cancelled and replaced, the number of those who did not cast their votes. They shall record objections submitted by lists or candidates or their agents during polling or counting.
3. The protocol shall be signed by the station staff and the agents present and stamped with the Commission's seal.
4. A copy of the protocol shall be posted in a prominent place at the polling station.

Article (47)

1. The Commission shall receive the counting protocols from the polling station committees for each Local Authority Council and commence the aggregation of results within twenty-four hours from the time of closing the polls, in the presence of agents of electoral lists, candidates, and accredited observers and journalists. The CEC may extend this window for an additional twenty-four hours if required by technical necessities.
2. Thereafter, the Commission shall publish the preliminary results of the elections in the Local Authority Councils where it aggregated the counting protocols specific to their stations, including the number of votes obtained by each list and each candidate therein, and the number of votes for candidates for Village Councils.

Article (48)

The Commission shall take appropriate decisions regarding complaints and objections, and may order a recount of any ballot boxes in the Local Authority.

Article (49)

Election Results

1. Lists that pass the threshold percentage, which is (5%) of the total valid votes for all lists, shall obtain a number of seats proportional to the total votes they received, in accordance with the provisions of Article (50) of this Decree-Law.
2. The seats obtained by each list shall be distributed among its candidates according to the number of votes obtained by each candidate within the list.
3. Seats in Village Councils shall be distributed among the candidates according to their ranking in Article (51) of this Decree-Law.
4. If only one list is nominated in Municipal Councils or the number of candidates in a Village Council equals the number of Council seats, and the number of candidates meets both the women's representation requirements and the Muslim-Christian representation requirements, in Councils with an Muslim-Christian quota, no elections shall be held in that Local Authority, and that list shall win by acclamation the seats of the Municipal Council, and the candidates shall win the seats of the Village Council.
5. In the event that the number of candidates in the lists for a Municipal Council or candidates for a Village Council:
 - a. does not meet the allocated number of council seats, the candidates shall be declared winners by acclamation, and the Ministry of Local Government shall appoint the remaining members, taking into account women and Muslim-Christian representation.

- b. Meets or exceeds the number of councils seats, and does not meet minimum requirements for representing women, Muslim-Christian representation, or either of those, the Ministry of Local Governance shall appoint the minimum number to represent women and/or the any of the two religions, and elections shall be held to determine the winners of the remaining seats.

Article (50) **Allocation of Seats in Municipal Councils**

The Commission, after completing the aggregation of the counting protocols in a Municipal Council, shall calculate the seats obtained by each list according to the "Sainte-Laguë" method, as follows:

1. Determine the lists that passed the threshold percentage.
2. Exclude the lists that did not meet the threshold percentage from the distribution of seats.
3. Divide the number of votes obtained by each list that passed the threshold percentage by odd numbers (1, 3, 5, 7...).
4. Arrange the quotients of the division in descending order.
5. Distribute the seats among the lists according to the order of the [their] quotients mentioned in paragraph (4) of this article, such that the first seat is given to the list with the highest quotient, then the second seat is given to the list with the next highest quotient, and so on until the distribution of all seats is completed.
6. In case of equality in the division quotients, the seat shall be given to the list that obtained the lower number of seats at the moment of equality. If equality resulted during the allocation of the first seat, a draw shall be conducted between the equal lists to determine the list that obtains the first seat. If equality resulted during the allocation of the last seat, the seat shall be given to the list that obtained the higher number of votes. If equality resulted in both votes and seats, a draw shall be conducted to determine the list that obtains the seat.
7. Candidates of each list shall be ranked in descending order according to the number of votes obtained by each candidate. In case of equality in votes between two or more candidates within the list, their ranking shall be determined according to the order approved by the list in the nomination application.
8. The seats obtained by the list shall be distributed among its candidates according to their ranking specified in paragraph (7) of this Article.
9. If, following the completion of seat allocation, the representation of women in the Council is less than the minimum limit, the last male candidate winner shall be replaced by the first non-winning woman from the same list, and this process shall be repeated until women obtain the minimum number of Council seats.
10. If there are no non-winning women in the list of the last candidate, the replacement process, in the same manner, shall shift to the preceding winning candidate.

Article (51) **Allocation of Seats in Village Councils**

After completing the aggregation of the counting protocols in a Village Council, the CEC shall do the following:

1. Arrange the names of the candidates according to the number of votes obtained by each candidate, the highest followed by the next highest. In case of equality in votes between two or more candidates, the ranking shall be according to nomination precedence.
2. Allocate the seats in Village Councils to the candidates according to the ranking above.

3. Verify that the representation of women in the elected Council meets the minimum required number following the allocation of seats according to paragraph (2) of this article.
4. If the minimum required number of women is not met, the last male candidate winner shall be replaced by the first non-winning woman according to the ranking stipulated in paragraph (1) of this article, and the process shall be repeated until the minimum limit for women's representation is met.

Article (52)

Allocation of Seats in Authorities with Muslim-Christian Representation

1. Seats in Municipal Councils with Muslim-Christian Representation [requirements] shall be allocated to the candidates of the lists according to the order of the division quotients until the number of candidates from either religion reaches the number of seats allocated to them. Non-winning candidates from this religion shall be excluded from seat allocation, and it shall continue for candidates from the other religion until they reach the number of seats allocated to them.
2. Seats in Village Councils with a Muslim-Christian Representation shall be allocated to the candidates according to their ranking stipulated in paragraph (1) of Article (51) of this Decree-Law. If the number of winning candidates from either religion reaches the number of seats allocated to them, non-winning candidates from this religion shall be excluded, and seat allocation shall continue for candidates from the other religion until they reach the number of seats allocated to them.
3. If, during seat allocation, it turns out that there is a deficiency in women's representation after allocating the seats, the CEC shall replace the last winning male candidate according to the following:
 - a. In a Municipal Council, [shall be replaced] with the first non-winning woman of the same religion in the list. In case there is no woman among the non-winning candidates of the same religion as the last winning male candidate, the first non-winning shall be replaced by the last male candidate winner of the same religion, and from the same list. If the religion of the winning male candidates is different from the religion of the non-winning women candidates, the replacement shall shift to the list that obtained the preceding seat to carry out the replacement process in the same manner.
 - b. In a Village Council, [shall be replaced] with the first non-winning woman of the religion of the last winner male candidate according to their ranking stipulated in paragraph (1) of Article (51) of this Decree-Law. If there is not a woman of the same religion among the non-winning candidates as the last male candidate winner, the highest-ranking non-winning women candidate shall be replaced by the last male candidate winner of the same religion.

Article (53)

Announcement of Election Results

The Chairperson of the Central Elections Commission or a person he/she delegates shall announce the election results, which include the number of votes obtained by the candidates in Village Councils and the number of votes obtained by each list and the number of seats obtained in a Municipal Council, and the names of the winning candidates for each list, within a period not exceeding (72) hours from the completion of the counting process, and shall issue official certificates to the winners.

Article (54)

1. The Commission shall keep the voter lists, candidate names, and ballot papers until the end of the legal challenges period and their adjudication by the competent court.
2. The Commission shall keep the election protocols, objections, challenges, and decisions issued regarding them for the period of an electoral cycle.

Article (55)

Challenge to Election Results

1. Every voter, candidate, or list representative has the right to challenge the announced election results before the Competent Court within seven days from the date of announcing the results. The Court must decide on it within five working days from the date of its submission and shall notify the Commission of the decisions it issues to act on them accordingly.
2. If the Court's decision rules to annul the election process fully or partially, elections shall be held within six weeks from the date of issuance of the decision in accordance with the provisions of this Decree-Law, and the voter lists approved in the first polling shall be adopted in the second polling.

Article (56)

The Elected Council

1. The Council shall hold its first meeting within ten days from the date of announcing the final election results, upon an invitation by the eldest member who shall preside over the meeting. The meeting shall be valid with the attendance of two-thirds of the members.
2. If it is not possible to hold the meeting with the attendance of two-thirds of the members, the eldest member shall call for another meeting within a period not exceeding four days from the date of the first meeting. This meeting shall be valid with the attendance of the majority of the Council members.
3. If the fourteen-day period from the date of announcing the final results expires and it was not possible to convene the first meeting of the Council in accordance with paragraphs (1) and (2) of this Article , the Director of the Local Government Directorate in the Governorate shall invite the Council, and the eldest attending member shall preside over the meeting.
4. In its first meeting, the Council shall elect a Chairperson and a Deputy Chairperson, from among its members, by a majority of the attending members. If none of the candidates obtains the majority, the election shall be repeated between the two candidates who obtained the highest votes. The candidate who obtains the highest votes in the second round shall be the Chairperson of the Council. If the votes are equal, the Chairperson of the Council shall be chosen from the list which received the highest number of votes. If both are from the same list, or in case of a tie in a Village Council, a lottery is conducted among the two of them.
5. The elected Council shall assume its duties within one week from the date of electing the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the Council.

Article (57)

Council Chairpersons

1. The same member may not be elected as a Chairperson of the Council for more than two consecutive terms.
2. Chairpersons of Municipal Councils are required to dedicate themselves full-time. It is not permitted to combine the Council presidency with any other position.

Article (58)

Vacancy of the Chairperson's Position

1. The position of Chairperson/Mayor shall be considered vacant in any of the following cases:
 - a) Death.
 - b) Loss of legal capacity or incapacity to perform duties pursuant to a final judicial ruling.
 - c) If two-thirds of the Local Authority Council members withdraw their confidence in him/her.
 - d) Loss of any of the requirements for candidacy.

- e) Loss of membership per the provisions of the applicable Local Authorities Law and the regulations issued thereunder.
 - f) Resignation.
2. The resignation of a Chairperson from the office of the chair shall require submitting justifiable reasons accepted by the Minister of Local Governance. The Deputy Chairperson shall assume the powers of the Chairperson. The Council members shall elect a new Chairperson from among themselves within one month from the date of the vacancy of the Chairperson position, in accordance with the provisions of Article (56) of this Decree-Law regarding the legal quorum for sessions and voting.
 3. In case of not submitting justifiable reasons to the resignation of a Chairperson, the Minister of Local Governance may accept the resignation and appoint a new Chairperson from among the members of the Council. The Council of Ministers shall approve this appointment.
 4. The provisions of the first paragraph of this Article shall apply to the Deputy Chairperson, and a new Deputy Chairperson shall be elected in accordance with the provisions of Article (56) of this Decree-Law, in terms of legal quorum for sessions and voting.

Article (59) **Vacancy of a Member's Position**

1. A member's position shall be considered vacant in the following cases:
 - a) Resignation.
 - b) Death.
 - c) Loss of legal capacity or incapacity to perform duties pursuant to a final judicial ruling.
 - d) Loss of any of the requirements for candidacy.
 - e) Loss of membership pursuant to the provisions of the applicable Local Authorities Law and regulations issued thereunder.
2. The Council shall announce the vacancy of the member's position and inform the Ministry of Local Government and the Commission thereof.
3. The vacancy for membership of Municipal Councils shall be filled by the member who follows the last winners from the same list to which the member whose seat became vacant belongs.
4. If the vacancy leads to a deficiency in women representation, the vacancy shall be filled by the first non-winning woman from the same list. If there is not a non-winning woman in that list, the vacancy shall be filled by a woman from the list preceding it in the quotient result, taking into account the preservation of the Muslim-Christian Representation [requirements] in the replacement process in Authorities with Muslim-Christian Representation [requirements].
5. If there is no member following the last winner from the same list, the transition shall be made to fill the vacancy with the non-winning candidate who follows the last winning candidate from the list that precedes that list in the quotients upon calculating the results according to the "Sainte-Laguë" method.
6. If there are no non-winning candidates on the winning lists to fill the vacancy in the council membership, the Ministry of Local Government may fill the vacancy by appointment, taking into account women and Muslim-Christian representation.
7. The vacancy for membership of Village Councils shall be filled according to the descending order of votes obtained by the non-winning candidates, taking into account the application of Articles (51, 52) of this Decree-Law. If there are no such candidates to fill the vacancy, the Ministry of Local Governance may fill the vacancy by appointment, taking into account women and Muslim-Christian representation.
8. The Commission shall issue a certificate to the new member to fill the vacancy.

Article (60)

Dissolution of the Council

1. The Council shall be considered dissolved if the positions of more than half of the Council members become vacant simultaneously.
2. The Ministry of Local Government, according to a decision from the Minister, shall appoint a committee to manage the affairs of the dissolved Council until elections are held.

Article (61)

Electoral Crimes

Anyone who commits the following acts shall be punished by imprisonment for a period not exceeding three years or a fine not exceeding three thousand Jordanian Dinars or its equivalent in legally circulated currency, or by both penalties:

1. Offered money directly or indirectly, or loaned, or promised to achieve a benefit for any voter to induce him/her to vote in a particular manner, to refrain from voting, or any other way which would impact the freedom of a voter.
2. Requested, directly or indirectly, money, a loan, a benefit, or any other return for himself/herself or for others with the intent to vote in a specific manner, refrain from voting, or influence others to vote or refrain from voting.

Article (62)

Anyone who infringes upon the freedom of voters by committing any of the following acts that shall be punished by imprisonment for a period not less than six months and not exceeding one year or a fine not exceeding one thousand Jordanian Dinars or its equivalent in legally circulated currency, or by both penalties:

1. Used force or violence or threatened to use them against any person to compel or influence him/her to vote, or refrain from voting, for a specific list over another, for a candidate over another, or to participate or refrain from participating in any election meeting or rally.
2. Incited, assisted, or enabled another person to vote in the elections while knowing that he/she is not legally qualified to do so.
3. Obstructed or attempted to obstruct or influence the will of any voter in any way that changes or affects the exercise of his/her right to vote with complete freedom.
4. Induced any voter by any means to disclose the name of the list and candidates, or any of which, he/she voted for or to reveal the contents of the ballot paper he/she cast.

Article (63)

Anyone who commits any of the following acts shall be punished by imprisonment for a period not less than six months and not exceeding one year or a fine not exceeding one thousand Jordanian Dinars or its equivalent in legally circulated currency, or by both penalties:

1. Presented or used forged or incorrect documents for identification.
2. Impersonated another voter.
3. Claimed illiteracy or disability in order to obtain assistance in voting, contrary to the truth.
4. Voted more than once in any polling station.
5. Voted while knowing he/she does not have the right to vote.

Article (64)

Anyone who commits any of the following acts shall be punished by imprisonment for a period not less than six months and not exceeding one year or a fine not exceeding one thousand Jordanian Dinars or its equivalent in legally circulated currency, or by both penalties:

1. Transported, concealed, assisted in transporting, destroying, or concealing any election materials contrary to the provisions of this Decree-Law, without being assigned to do so by any competent authority.
2. Printed, manufactured, or prepared any election materials of an official nature stipulated in this Decree-Law without request or authorization from a competent authority.

Article (65)

Anyone who commits any of the following acts shall be punished by imprisonment for a period not less than six months and not exceeding one year or a fine not exceeding one thousand Jordanian Dinars or its equivalent in legally circulated currency, or by both penalties:

1. Forged, concealed, destroyed, or inserted false data in the election protocols, lists of voters, or nomination applications.
2. Inserted or allowed the insertion of ballot papers into any [ballot] box for persons who did not vote at all or for fake persons.

Article (66)

Anyone who commits any of the following acts shall be punished by imprisonment for a period not less than six months and not exceeding one year or a fine not exceeding one thousand Jordanian Dinars or its equivalent in legally circulated currency, or by both penalties:

1. Revealed any secret of the electoral process.
2. Disseminated or spread, prior to or during the elections, any false statements about the conduct of a candidate or a list with the intention to influence the results of elections.
3. Violated the provisions and controls of electoral campaigning provided in this Decree-Law.
4. Committed, omitted, refrained from, shunned or neglected carrying out a duty stipulated by this Decree-Law unless another specific penalty is imposed for such act.

Article (67)

The penalty shall be doubled if the perpetrator of the crime is a member of the Commission or the staff working with it, provided that the prescribed penalty does not exceed its maximum limit.

Article (68)

The Competent Court may deprive anyone convicted of an election offence of the right to vote and to stand as a candidate for a period not less than four years. If he/she is an elected member of a council, his/her membership resulting from the elections where the crime occurred shall be forfeited.

Article (69) Regulations for Implementation

The Commission shall issue the necessary instructions and regulations for the implementation of the provisions of this Decree-Law.

Article (70)

Categories of Councils

1. Categories of councils shall be classified based on an objective and impartial criterion based on the area and population of the Local Authority.
2. Local Authorities and the number of their council members shall be determined by a system issued by the Council of Ministers, such that the councils are divided into four categories with the number of members being (9, 11, 13, 15) members.

Article (71)

Christian Quota

The President of the State may issue a decree allocating a number of seats for Christians in certain Local Authorities, and the Commission shall put in place the system ensuring its implementation.

Article (72)

Transitional Provisions

For the purposes of applying this Decree-Law:

1. The first elections for the Local Authority Councils shall be held in accordance with this Decree-Law within a period not exceeding six months from its effective date. The Council of Ministers shall take into consideration, when issuing a decision determining the date of their holding, that the period is sufficient to exhaust the necessary periods for undertaking the procedures stipulated in this Decree-Law.
2. Notwithstanding what is stated in paragraph (1) of this Article:
 - a. If the prevailing force majeure circumstances in the Southern Governorates Gaza Strip prevent the holding of Local Authority Council elections therein, the Council of Ministers may, based on a recommendation from the Commission, postpone them for a period it deems appropriate until those reasons cease to exist and the possibility of holding them in accordance with the Law is available.
 - b. The Commission may request the postponement of the election date in one or more Councils for a period not exceeding four weeks if technical necessities and the integrity of the elections so require. The postponement decision shall be issued by the Council of Ministers.
3. The Local Authority Councils whose term of office ends before the date set for the elections in accordance with paragraphs (1) and (2) of this Article shall continue to take care of the Council's affairs until the elections are held and the elected council takes up its duties, taking into consideration the powers of the Minister of Local Governance in cases of vacancies stipulated in this Decree-Law.

Article (73)

The Law Concerning the Election of Local Authority Councils No. (10) of 2005 and its amendments, and the regulations issued thereunder, and anything that conflicts with the provisions of this Decree-Law, are hereby repealed.

Article (74)

All competent authorities, each within its jurisdiction, shall implement the provisions of this Decree-Law, which shall enter into force from the date of its publication in the Official Gazette.

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Mahmoud Abbas
President of the State of Palestine
Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organisation