

Afghan Youth Debates: Ballot Shortage a Costly Error

Author: [Mohammad Arif Anwari](#)

A university lecturer from the northern Afghan province of Balkh has criticised the electoral authorities for failing to distribute enough ballot papers for the April 5 vote.

Nur Agha Sharifi told an IWPR debate on May 14 that thousands of people spent long hours queuing at polling stations at great personal risk, only to find they were unable to cast their ballots.

He said the costly administrative error was tantamount to doing the Taleban's work for them, given that their aim, too, had been to prevent Afghans voting.

"What's the difference between what the Taleban wanted to do and what the Independent Election Commission [IEC] did by not providing people with ballot papers?" Sharifi asked. "I believe there is no difference at all. The Taleban didn't want people to participate in the elections, and the commission failed to manage the number of ballot papers properly, preventing people from voting. I see no difference in the outcomes of these two things."

Taleban leaders are warning that anyone going to vote in the second round of the election - scheduled for June 14 - will again be considered a legitimate target.

The IWPR debate took place at Balkh University in Mazar-e Sharif before an audience of more than 80 local students. As well as Sharifi, speakers at the meeting included Ajmal Ahadi, the IEC's deputy operations manager for Balkh province.

Ahmad Hamed Abedi, a student, asked why the electoral authorities had not made public the names of individuals who were now known to have committed fraud in the first round.

He called on the Independent Election Complaints Commission (IECC) to review suspect voting practices in a more transparent manner. He also suggested that the media should be invited to attend its sessions.

"The first round of the elections is now over. But I wish they [the IEC and IECC] had told the media the names of those who committed fraud in Balkh," he told the debate. "It isn't enough for us to just see a few [discounted] ballot boxes. We need to know who has committed fraud in Balkh and who's playing games with our destiny."

Mohammad Arif Anwari is a student at Balkh University and an IWPR trainee.

*This report was produced as part of **Open Minds: Speaking Up, Reaching Out - Promoting University and Youth Participation in Afghan Elections**, an IWPR initiative funded by the US embassy in Kabul.*

Location: [Afghanistan](#)

Topic: [Elections](#)

Source URL: <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/afghan-youth-debates-ballot-shortage-costly-error>