

RASED for Parliamentary Monitoring Program 3rd Weekly Report on the Performance of the 17th Jordanian Parliament during its 2nd Ordinary Session November 22, 2014

During the third week of its 2nd Ordinary Session, the House of Representatives worked to finish electing its permanent committees. Electing the committees took four consecutive sessions, three of which were held during the third week.

By forming these committees, the House of Representatives finished one of the most pressing tasks on its agenda. Of the 17 committees formed, 3 of them were formed through competitive elections (the Legal Committee, the Committee of Arabic and International Affairs, and the Committee of Public Services and Tourism and Ruins), while 17 other committees were formed by default with no competition for seats.

The House of Representatives was late in forming its permanent committees due to the time taken by members to reach informal agreements on committee membership outside of the formal voting process. In most cases, members agreed on committee memberships by appealing to personal ties and friendships and reaching agreements under the table.

RASED observed these processes of informal decision-making, and it also monitored and photographed the voting process that occurred afterwards. Through this monitoring, RASED noticed that there numerous violations of the transparency and accountability in the process of committee formation.

Some of the most significant violations observed by RASED are detailed below:

1. A number of MPs circulated papers containing pre-formed committee rosters before the vote occurred. These rosters were developed through internal agreements between groups of MPs without consideration of others before the voting process took place.

2. For the voting, MPs were not given proper voting booths that afford privacy to vote in secret. Instead, MPs were voting in places where their ballots were visible to others, and the Speaker of the House had to intervene more than once to ask candidates for committees to stand further from places where MPs were filling out their ballots.

3. MPs tended to crowd around members of the elections committee when they made announcements to the body, causing confusion when registration procedures and results were announced.

4. MPs and candidates for committees interfered in the voting process numerous times. Some MP candidates stood near MPs as they filled out their ballots, which may have had an effect on MPs' voting behavior.

5. Some MPs openly displayed their ballot papers, violating the secrecy of the elections.

As a result of these infractions, the elections occurred without fairness or credibility. The House of Representatives did not pay attention to these violations, and there were no penalties given out to MPs for infractions of the internal bylaws.

The lack of credibility in the House's procedures will weaken the overall performance of the House, especially as it enters a critical period when it will consider a number of important political, economic, and social reforms.

During the third week, the House of Representatives published the names of MPs attending and absent in the session held on the afternoon of Sunday, November 16. This action had been requested by RASED in previous statements, as it will help the parliament to maintain a proper quorum for its sittings and facilitate the imposition of consequences for MPs who routinely violate the House's internal bylaws.