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Consortium of Ethiopian Human Rights Organizations (CEHRO)

Ethiopian 7th General Election Preliminary Observation Report

June, 2026

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

1. Introduction

Election represents a significant milestone for citizens to exercise their political rights and contribute to the country's democratic governance. In accordance with the election observer accreditation granted by NEBE, the Consortium of Ethiopian Human Rights Organizations (CEHRO) has deployed 18 mobile observers on the Election Day, June 1, 2026. These observers were tasked with observing for the 7th General Election in Addis Ababa, Somali, Benishangul-Gumuz, and Amhara Regions. Each observer was assigned to observe at least 3 to 5 polling stations (as a mobile observer) in their respective constituency, totaling the actual observation activity to address 79 polling stations.

Furthermore, on June 09, 2026, CEHRO deployed mobile observers for the general election conducted at Special Polling Stations (SPS) at Assosa Zone (Bambasi IDPs camps) in Benshangul Gumuz Region and has been also monitoring SPS in South Wollo Zone of Amhara region.

Ahead of the election day, CEHRO has been engaged in a number of preparatory activities such as delivering civic and voter education in the IDPs camps. Additionally, CEHRO has organized a high-level policy dialogue on digital technologies and electoral process, bringing together government representatives, civil society organizations, media, and other key stakeholders. As part of this initiative, a technical training session for election observers was provided aimed at equipping them with the skills and tools needed to monitor, document, and respond to digital rights issues during elections.

Moreover, as the meaningful participation of civil society organizations, media, human rights defenders, and citizens, generally civic engagement, is essential in the electoral process, CEHRO developed a comprehensive Election Time Civic Space Monitoring toolkit. Drawing on this toolkit, CEHRO delivered engaging training to local and grassroots CSOs, media organizations and election time observers. Furthermore, CEHRO organized and facilitated political parties' debates to enable an inclusive platform for political actors to present their views, thereby contributing to open civic space and democratic engagement on peace and security, economic, state-citizen engagement and right to food issues in collaboration with EBS TV and Ahadu Radio and TV.

2. Methodology of the Observation

The election observation mission was conducted through utilizing systematic observation with standardized checklists and mobile observation methodology developed to ensure objective, and impartial election observation. Furthermore, media monitoring was employed to assess the overall civic space and voting process across the 7th general election. CEHRO has also established an election process monitoring situation room that serves as a central coordination hub to oversee the voting process and respond to critical incidents at CHERO Secretariat.

Observers were deployed through a mobile observation approach which allowed CEHRO to gather anecdotal information from various pooling stations. In this approach each observer covered 3 to 5 polling stations on election day, while observing the polling station opening and vote counting process in one station. The observers were selected based on their impartiality, integrity, and ability to adhere to the observer's guidelines and code of conduct.

CEHRO has developed a comprehensive election observation checklist and critical incident reporting formats for observers. These checklists contained a set of questions that covered various election day procedures. The procedures that were assessed through the checklists were: the arrival of observers and election officials to polling stations, the opening of polling stations, voting, setup, closing, and counting procedures. In addition to this, observers were given a critical incident reporting form that they would fill out in cases where serious violations of election day procedures have the potential of changing the result of the elections.

Prior to deployment, observers received intensive training and orientation on the prepared check lists, critical incident forms, the principles, standards, and the applicable electoral laws during election observation. Thereafter, CEHRO election observers covered a total of 79 regular polling stations; 12 Special Polling Stations (SPS) at Asossa Zone (Bambasi IDP Camps) where the voting procedures were carried out. Furthermore, CEHRO observers documented the election day situations in SPS at South Wollo IDP camps.

PART 1:

3. Election Day Observation Report: 01 June 2026

This section outlines the observation findings that resulted from CEHRO election day observation at 79 polling stations on 01 June 2026. Throughout the election day, observers deployed by the CEHRO reported on the arrival of polling station officials, the opening and set-up of polling stations, the voting and counting process. Throughout the election day CEHRO received 11 critical incidents reports which highlight procedural irregularities, that NEBE should take necessary measures or reforms in the next electoral processes.

3.1. Pre-voting phases

a) Observers' access to Polling Stations

Under the Ethiopian electoral legal frameworks, accredited election observers are granted the right to access polling stations and observe voting, vote counting process and announcement/posting of the results.¹ Observers are also entitled to carry-out observation activities without any undue influence from any governmental or other institution or persons.²

During the election day all CEHROs' observers were duly recognized and allowed to access polling stations. The election officials were also extended full cooperation for observers throughout the day. The observers have also obtained full access to observe the election process and election-related forms without any barriers. As a result, there was no restriction, interference, or undue pressure documented on election observers in carrying out their observation activities. Furthermore, the polling stations officials provided designated spaces for the election observers including CEHRO observers, which enabled them to observe the voting process without any obstructions.

B. Arrival and Preparedness of Election Officials

¹ Proclamation No. 1162/2019, *The Ethiopian Electoral, Political Parties Registration and Election's Code of Conduct Proclamation*, 25th Year No. 97, Addis Ababa, 16th October, 2019, [hereinafter cited as Proclamation No. 1162/2019], Art. 116.

² Local Election Observers' Accreditation, Working Procedure and Code of Conduct Directive no. 5/2020, Art. 11.

Proclamation No. 1162/2019 under article 49 requires the voting process to commence at 6:00 AM.³ To ensure orderly and timely opening of the polling station, election officials are required to be present earlier at the polling stations earlier than the opening time.

CEHRO observers reported that in all polling stations election officials arrived before 5:30 AM to prepare for opening. Observers in some polling stations arrived before 5:30 AM and by the time they reached the polling stations, the election officials had already organized a secrecy booth and other election materials. The timely arrival of election officials and opening of the polling station is one of the key indicators to allow the participation of 1,500 voters throughout the election day.

According to the electoral law, prior to the commencement of the voting process an average of three (3) election officials in addition to the polling station head need to be present at a specific polling station. CEHRO observers reported that an average of four (4) polling station officials were present at the observed polling stations.

C. Gender Composition of Election Officials

The participation of women in electoral processes is a fundamental right enshrined within international and regional frameworks.⁴ It includes engagement of women as voters, candidates, and election workers without fear and discrimination. Ethiopian Electoral Proclamation No. 1394/2025 under arts. 2(2) asserts that the recruitment of election officials shall ensure gender representation at constituency and polling station level.

CEHRO observers assessed and reported that in most polling stations (58.8%), more than two female election officials were observed. While two female election officials are observed in 23.6% of the observed polling stations, only one female election official is found in 17.6% of the observed polling stations. This observation indicates that women are well represented among election officials, which is an important step in ensuring women's participation in the electoral process.

D. Availability of Election Materials

The availability of sufficient election material is one of the essential and critical requirements to conduct the voting process. Polling stations are obliged under the electoral laws to keep election

³ Proclamation No. 1162/2019, Art. 49.

⁴ UN, *Women and Election: Guide to promoting the participation of Women in Elections*, United Nations, March 2005, P. 21 & ff.

materials dispatched from their constituency and administer the proper voting process accordingly.⁵ Accurate and enough election materials were available in all polling stations visited throughout the election day. CEHRO's observers also reported that electoral materials such as ballot papers, ballot boxes, ballot box seals, official NEBE stamps, indelible ink, and Reconciliation and Results forms were present at polling stations when voting commenced. Moreover, election coordinators from NEBE were observed effectively facilitating the process to ensure that there was no shortage of voting materials.

E. Accessibility of Polling Stations

One means of increasing voting participation in the electoral process is ensuring polling stations accessibility for vulnerable groups. The manner polling stations are organized should make sure that persons with disabilities (PWDs), pregnant women and other persons with mobility challenges are able to easily reach polling stations without any barriers. Proclamation No. 1394/2025 recognized the key importance of creating a robust system in the electoral process to enhance women's and PWDs political participation in the voting process.⁶ Reports from CEHRO's election day observers revealed that the polling stations were accessible for both gender and vulnerable groups, as the polling stations are established in plain/flat areas.

Proclamation No. 1162/2019 requires the polling station officials to provide priority to vote for the disabled, the elderly and pregnant women.⁷ CEHRO observation reports indicated that there was an orderly managed voter queue starting from 5:40 AM, which enabled providing priority and assistance for vulnerable groups. In some polling stations, there were instances where vulnerable groups were not initially given priority due to overcrowding; however, the election officials later ensured that vulnerable groups received the required priority.

F. Ballot Box Verification and Sealing

Ballot box verification and sealing process is an important step to protect the integrity, credibility, and transparency of the vote from the very beginning of voting until counting. Under the Ethiopian electoral legislation, a polling station official is required to demonstrate the ballot boxes, in the

⁵ Proclamation No. 1162/2019, Art. 15.

⁶ Proclamation No. 1394/2025, *A Proclamation to amend the Ethiopian Electoral, Political Parties Registration and Election's Code of Conduct Proclamation*, 31st Year No.66, Addis Ababa, 5th September, 2025, Preamble para. 2.

⁷ Proclamation No. 1162/2019, Art. 52.

presence of observers, independent candidates and other election officials, to confirm that the ballot box is empty.⁸

In polling stations observed by CEHRO, the election officials adhere to these legal requirements to ensure the credibility of the voting process. The fact that the ballot boxes are confirmed as empty before the commencement of the voting process is an encouraging sign of a democratic election process. After the ballot boxes were sealed, they were placed in a visible and well-lit place, where political parties' agents and observers could clearly see the casting of votes.

In any democratic society, party agents are an essential part of the electoral process. They are the eyes and ears of political parties on the ground, monitoring the voting process and playing a critical role in ensuring that elections are free, fair, and transparent. However, in most of the polling stations, only the ruling party agents are observed during the verification and sealing of the ballot box.

3.2. Voting Process (starting from 6:00 AM)

Voting procedure is the other crucial area in election observation to document adherence to the electoral laws, transparency and credibility of the election process. This section highlights CEHRO's observation findings covering from the commencement to the closing of the voting process.

A. Timely Commencement of Voting Process

The voting process is required to begin at 6:00 AM to ensure all registered and eligible voters are able to cast their vote until the closing time.⁹ According to the reports collected from CEHRO mobile observers, in most polling stations (92.2%) polling stations were opened at 6:00 AM, whereas in 2 polling stations the voting process commenced between 6:45 - 7:00 AM.

Even though the opening of polling stations on time was encouraging in most polling stations, the delayed voting process at two polling stations in Assosa¹⁰ and in Mekaneyesus¹¹ resulted in overcrowding in the voter's queue. In Assosa, the timely commencement of the voting process

⁸ Proclamation No. 1162/2019, Art. 47 (3) (b).

⁹ Ibid, Art. 49 (1).

¹⁰ In Assosa city, Assosa Menele constituency with polling station code 063870203031.

¹¹ In Mekneyesus polling station named Tewledere with polling station code 0316802130402.

was delayed due to heavy rain, which caused water leakage in the polling station tent. On the other hand, in Meknayasus, even if the election officials were present at the polling station before 6:00 AM, they did not commence to arrange the polling station set-up.

B. Presence of unauthorized individuals within the polling stations

The Ethiopian electoral law prohibits the presence of unauthorized individuals at the polling stations during the voting process. Under article 48 of Proclamation No. 1162/2019, except for election officers, agents of political parties and independent candidates, members of Grievance Hearing Committee and accredited election observers, anyone who is not a voter or who has already voted shall not be present in a polling station.

Most observers reported that voters are served by the election officials in 92.2% of the observed polling stations. However, in six (6) polling stations (7.8%)¹², voters were not only served by election officials. Instead, individuals who were neither voters nor election officials were entered into the polling stations and assisted voters with the procedure to cast their vote, marking the ballot, and, in some instances, entering the secrecy booth with voters. This situation is observed as posing a serious risk to the principle of the secret ballot and credibility of the voting process.

C. Assisted Voting by Election Officials

In a voting process it is important that persons of lower literacy, persons with disabilities (PWDs), elderly, persons with mobility challenges, are provided with the necessary support by his/her own assistant. It is intended to ensure the inclusion of all citizens in the election process. Accordingly, the election officials shall provide assistance for votes only to explain to the voter his rights so that he can properly understand and use it. However, frequent assistive voting processes may endanger the secrecy of the voting process.

The reports gathered from CEHRO observers revealed that Election officials were observed in ensuring that voters who needed assistance were able to vote through their own personal assistants. However, the election officials were also observed frequently joining the voters at the booth,

¹² Bole Lemi Kura constituency 28 with polling station code 1453902060102; in Qoloji IDP camp polling station with code 0535106001120; in Qoloji IDP settlement camp polling station Faadnno Xasan with polling station code 0538106001101; in Qoloji Settlement Camp polling station with code 0538106001103; in Qoloji IDP Settlement Camp kebele 11 polling station with code 0538106001011; Lemi Kura Beshale Secondary School area polling station, constituency 17 with code 1452313060104.

without a clear request from the voters for assistance. Furthermore, the level of assisted voting was very high in the voting process which took place in the Qoloji IDP Settlement Kebele 11 polling station in the Somali Regional State¹³, reflecting the high levels of illiteracy within the internally displaced community.

D. Secrecy of the Voting Process

The right to cast a secret ballot in a public election is a core value in a democratic election system. Secrecy and privacy in elections guard against coercion and are essential to integrity in the electoral process. Secrecy of the ballot principle is guaranteed under article 38 of the FDRE Constitution and under the Ethiopian electoral laws through which the voters express their will freely without any discrimination and with popular participation.¹⁴

CEHRO's observers reported that secrecy booths are readily available in all observed polling stations. Although in most polling stations (87.5%), the voters were able to vote freely without any intimidation in the secrecy booths, in eight (8) polling stations (12.5%), practices that undermine the secret ballot principle were observed. Election officials were frequently observed interfering with the voters in the secrecy booth without the voters' request for assistance.

In one (1) polling station¹⁵, two (2) voters were observed in the secrecy booth discussing the details of the ballot papers and casting their votes together. In the Qoloji IDPs settlement camp, Kebele 11 polling station, election officials were observed marking on the ballot papers on behalf of the voters, compromising the secret ballot principle and the integrity of the election process. Furthermore, many voters were not using the secrecy booth, and the election officials also failed to direct them to cast their vote in the secrecy booth.¹⁶

E. Voters' Verification

Under the Ethiopian electoral laws voters are required or allowed to vote only by appearing in person. Therefore, an eligible voter must appear at the polling station where they are registered, present the required identification, and cast their own vote.¹⁷ In other words there is no possibility

¹³ Qoloji IDP Settlement Camp kebele 11 polling station with code 0538106001011.

¹⁴ Proclamation No. 1162/2019, Art. 47 (3) (b). *see also*, Proclamation No. 1/1995, *Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia*, Federal Negarit Gazeta, 1st Year, No. 1, Addis Ababa, 21 August 1995, Art. 38.

¹⁵ Lemi Kura Woreda 8, Beshale Area pooling station/constituency No. 17, with pooling station code 1452313060104.

¹⁶ Qoloji IDP Settlement Camp kebele 11 polling station with code 0538106001011.

¹⁷ Proclamation No. 1162/2019, Arts. 5 & 50.

where an individual cast ballots by representation, except the voter due to disability requiring personal assistance.¹⁸ This principle is enshrined under article 5 of Proclamation No. 1162/2019 to ensure that citizens directly participate in the electoral process and contribute for democratic governance.

Several under-age individuals were observed while participating in the voting process at Qoloji IDPs Settlement Camp Kebelle 11 polling station.¹⁹ It appeared that parents or guardians had sent their children to vote on their behalf, which is clearly against the principle of direct ballot in a democratic election process. Even though the election officials were aware of the presence of underage voters (ineligible to vote), they did not take any corrective measures to prohibit the children from the voting process. Conversely, the polling station officials allowed the underage voters to vote on behalf of their families. Furthermore, the election officials were also observed while marking the ballot for the underage voters, which is against the principle of secret ballot.

In all polling stations, the voters' verification process is conducted by a single election official, which causes congestion and delays in the voting process. As the voter registrations were conducted both in a digital system and through manual voter registration, it was difficult for election officials to easily find and verify the voters. In one polling station, the election coordinators from NEBE tried to expedite the voting process through a digital voter verification system. However, as the digital voter verification system was utilized for a short period of time, it was observed that the slow voting process continued.

3.3. Vote Counting and Result Announcement

According to the Ethiopian election legislation, polling stations are set to be closed at 6:00 PM on election day, unless a contrary direction is given by NEBE. In the 7th general election NEBE extended the voting process for 6 hours and the polling stations continued the voting process until midnight (12:00 AM).²⁰

Counting is one of the crucial and sensitive components of any election. The Ethiopian election proclamation recognizes the manner in which counting is to be conducted and the counting process

¹⁸ Ibid, Art. 52.

¹⁹ Qoloji IDP Settlement Camp kebele 11 polling station with code 0538106001011.

²⁰ In accordance with article 49(4) of proclamation 1162/2029 extended the voting time till midnight to ensure that all register voters cast their ballot.

regardless of the place where it takes place is supposed to take place with the presence of political party agents, electoral officials, and members of the grievance hearing committee.²¹

The vote counting process was conducted within the polling stations on election day. According to CEHRO's observations, in most polling stations, the vote counting process was not conducted only by the election officials, as they were exhausted due to the prolonged voting time up to midnight. As a result, the political parties' agents and observers were assisting the election officials in counting the ballot papers. In one polling station, political party agents were observed marking on the blank ballot papers while the election officials were identifying the valid and invalid ballots.²²

The vote counting process commenced immediately after the closing of the polling stations. Most observers reported that there was no interruption to the counting process once it started. In one isolated incident counting was interrupted in Abramo Primary School polling station located at Assosa, Benishangul-gumuz region.²³ Although voting concluded at 6:00 PM with no remaining voters in line, the ballot-counting process, which was already underway, was suspended by polling officials upon receipt of the NEBE voting time extension notice. Even after the notice of the NEBE that polling stations with no voters in queue at 6:00 PM should proceed with vote counting, the observers confirmed that the election officials refused to commence vote counting.

4. Major and overall observations on 01 June 2026

CEHRO observation and critical incident reports revealed the following major areas of concern.

- **Violation of secret ballot:** even though the principle of secrecy of the ballot is guaranteed under the FDRE Constitution and Ethiopian electoral laws, CEHRO observed reported violation of this principle during the 7th general election. Election officials were marking ballots, entering with voters in the secrecy booth and providing frequent support for voters without the express request from the voters.
- **Unauthorized individuals within the polling stations:** there were individuals without any legal authorization found in the polling stations and guiding the voters on the election

²¹ Proclamation 1162/2029, Art 57.

²² Lemi Kura Woreda 8, Beshale Area pooling station/constituency No. 17, with pooling station code 1452313060104.

²³ Abramo Primary School polling station with code 0638706012501.

procedures. However, the election officials failed to take measures while observing individuals with no official NEBE accreditation.

- **Under-age voters:** any individual can be registered as a voter and be able to vote only when he/she reaches the age of 18. However, through the observation of the 7th general election children below 18 were allowed to vote by the election officials. Which is clearly against the electoral law as well as with the principle of direct election or election prohibited through representative.
- **Information Gaps:** NEBE extended the voting time-based article 49(4) of proclamation No. 1162/2019 until midnight. However, NEBE does not officially communicate the extension before or at the time of the closing of polling stations. Consequently, the election officials were aware of the extension at 9:00 PM. The delay of the announcement also created uncertainty among voters, political parties' agents and observers, regarding the applicable closing time. There are also instances where voters return to their home, considering that the polling station will be closed at 6:00 PM.

Article 49(2) of the proclamation requires the board to publicly *announce at least two days prior to the voting day*, if it decides special voting hours. However, such types of mandatory announcement within a specific period of time is not provided when NEBE decided under article 49(4) for the extension of the voting hours.

- **Political agents' involvement in vote counting process:** polling station officials are required under the election proclamation to count the vote in front of election observers, political agents and accredited media. However, political party agents were engaged in marking empty ballots. This clearly undermines the fairness and credibility of the election process.

PART 2:

5. Election Day Observation Report on Special Polling Stations (SPS): 09 June 2026

This section highlights the key findings of the election day observation mission conducted on Special Polling stations (SPS) based on ground observation and overall monitoring of the electoral process in these stations.

5.1. The pre-voting phase

A. Observers' access to Polling Stations

There was no restriction, interference, or undue pressure documented on election observers in carrying out their observation activities at Bambasi IDPs camps SPS. However, due to the limitation of space in the polling tents, there was no space provided for observers in 3 SPSs (25%). In 9 SPSs (75%), there were designated spaces for the election observers to observe the voting process without obstruction.

B. Preparedness and Gender Composition of Election Officials

Even though election officials reached the SPS before 11:30 (local time), they did not start to prepare the election materials on time. Election officials commenced to arrange the polling station after 6:00 AM, which led to the commencement of the voting process after 6:00 AM.

In all the SPSs where the election observation was conducted, more than three (3) election officials were present before the commencement of the voting to ensure the orderly opening of the voting process. Furthermore, in most of the observed SPSs, the gender composition involves more than two (2) female election officials.

C. Ballot Box Verification, Sealing, and Polling Stations Neutrality

In SPSs where the pre-voting process observation was conducted, the election officials demonstrated ballot boxes for election observers and sealed them accordingly. However, in all SPSs, no party agents were observed during the verification and sealing of the ballot box. After the ballot boxes were sealed, they were placed in a visible and well-lit place, where political election observers could clearly see the casting of votes.

D. Voters' Queue, Accessibility of SPSs, and Priority for Vulnerable Groups

The number of voters registered in the SPSs ranged from 33 to 289 per SPS. Thus, there was no voter queue or overcrowding observed, and in some of the SPSs, the voting process ended before 6:00 AM. However, the election officials provided necessary assistance for vulnerable groups in the polling stations. As the 10 SPSs were established within the IDPs camps and located in plain areas, no accessibility issues were observed. Even though two (2) SPSs were established at the primary school classrooms outside the IDPs Camp, no accessibility issues were also observed, as the SPSs have ramps for PWDs.

5.2. The Voting Process

A. Timely Commencement of Voting and Availability of Voting Materials

Even though the voting process had started in 9 SPSs (75%) based on the legally required time (6:00 AM), in 3 (25%) SPSs, the voting process commenced after 6:00 AM. The voting process was delayed due to heavy rainfall, which caused water leakage in the SPS's tent. The SPSs were also made of inadequate and low-quality materials, making them unable to withstand the rainfall. The observation found that insufficient attention was given to the preparation of SPSs, and it caused the interruption of the voting process. Despite this challenge, the SPSs' place was later changed to the partially constructed houses, which provide convenient opportunities for voters to cast their vote. However, it causes a change of place for the ballot boxes and election materials.

B. Awareness Creation Activities for Voters on the Voting Process

Election officials provided guidance on the voting process before voters cast their votes. However, in all polling stations where the observation was conducted, several voters did not have sufficient knowledge of the voting procedures and how to mark the ballot. Consequently, voters were repetitively requested assistance from election officials in the secrecy booth.

C. Secrecy of the Vote

The secrecy booths are readily available in all observed polling stations. Although in most polling stations the voters were able to vote freely without any intimidation, in two SPS the election officials were frequently observed interfering with the voters in the secrecy booth without the voters' request for assistance.

D. International and Domestic Observers and Accredited Media Representatives

In all observed special polling stations, there were only EHRC election monitors. However, there were no international observers, and no accredited media were documented in the SPSs.

5.3. Closing, Vote Counting and Result Announcement

In all SPSs, the voting process concluded within the legally required time. The vote counting process was conducted within the SPSs on election day, and the vote counting process was conducted only by the election officials. The election officials properly identified the valid and invalid ballots. Except in one SPS (Bambasi IDP camp 1 SPS with code 0638805010102), only one political party was contesting in most of the polling stations; thus, the vote-counting process was completed before 9:00 AM and did not take a significant amount of time.

6. Major and overall observations in SPS

CEHRO's on-ground and overall observation with regard to SPS in the IDPs camps revealed the following major issues and areas of concern that warrants further consideration, including in the upcoming elections.

- **Discrepancies on the criteria for the establishment of SPS:** The establishment of SPS varies across different areas and camps. In some locations, IDP camps with a higher number of residents do not have an SPS, while in other areas, camps with fewer IDPs have been prioritized for SPS placement. These, for example, have been observed at the South Wollo IDP camps, where in places such as the *Degan* IDP camps, with higher IDP numbers, there were no SPS stations. However, camps hosting a limited amount of IDP population, such as *Kutaber* and *Gerado* IDP camps, had special pooling stations
- **Information gaps:** Detailed information about the number and the specific location of the SPS was not clearly communicated in advance by NEBE, casting doubt on the transparency of the process for many stakeholders, including the civic society. For us at the CEHRO level even, we only know about this at late hours. Additionally, in some SPS, such as *Kutaber* and *Gerado* Camps, IDPs reported that they had no clear information about the date of the election and were only informed to vote on the eve of June 09, 2026.
- **Going to SPS for fear of reprisal rather than as a Civic Duty:** IDPs have indicated that their participation in the SPS is not driven by a sense of civic duty; rather, it is motivated by a fear of potential repercussions by local authorities. The IDPs exhibit a lack of interest

in electing candidates from their areas of origin/displacement. This sentiment was documented within the *Gerado* and *Kutaber* IDPs camps. Furthermore, recent reports by *Ethiopian Insider* have highlighted that IDPs residing in the *Debre Birhan* IDPs camps have been coerced into going to SPS to vote.

- **Vote counting and Electoral Engagement:** In both its civic and voter education as well as observation engagement, CEHRO observed that IDPs have a strong opposition casting their votes for candidates originating from their places of origin. They also assert that their votes should not be sent and counted in their place of origin. This concern, in particular, has been observed in all South Wollo area and Debre Birhan IDPs camps. While they are willing to participate in electoral processes, they emphasize that they will only do so if able to vote for candidates relevant to their current places of residence. These circumstances should perhaps trigger the revision of NEBE's existing special polling station directive that obliges IDPs to vote for candidates of their place of origin.
- **Separate election day for IDPs:** conducting a separate election in special polling stations in IDPs camps may be justified with the availability of resources and security situations. However, it may raise concern among the IDPs regarding the principle of equal participation in the democratic process. Thus, it may create the perception of inequality among IDPs and reduce the visibility of the election process for national and international observers. In IDPs context where there are information constraints, they may also be exposed to various misinformation's on the voting process. Fair, free and credible elections require inclusive and equal participation of all citizens, irrespective of their status to engage and contribute in a country's democratic governance. Thus, holding a separate election in the special polling stations for IDPs may affect their sense of inclusion with the other parts of the community.

About CEHRO

The Consortium of Ethiopian Human Rights Organizations (CEHRO) is a Consortium of 27 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) working on Human Rights, Democracy, and Sustainable Peace in Ethiopia. Over the past eight (8) years, CEHRO has been actively engaged in the advancement of human rights protection and promotion, democratic and sustainable peace values in Ethiopia by creating a common platform for human rights CSOs to articulate their voices and launch well-articulated and evidence-based advocacy for an enabling environment for the operation of civil society in Ethiopia. CEHRO's strategic priorities focus on capacity building of members and key stakeholders, policy advocacy, and broadening of civic space in Ethiopia.



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