



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

January 26, 2005

The Honorable Condoleeza Rice
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520-0001

Dear Secretary Rice:

It is clear, in just five days before the Iraqi elections are to be held, that it will be impossible to conclude anything about the extent to which corruption, voter intimidation or outright fraud will mar the results. The exercise will regrettably be a farce. The results will have no recognized legitimacy whatsoever, and surely do not merit association with the United States' notions of democracy.

The elections will not yield certifiable results due to the pitifully small number of election observers, and the total absence of international election observers from the process. Indeed, according to the Washington Post, this is the first transitional election in the past two decades that will not have international election observers touring polling stations. As you know, international monitors have independently observed and evaluated elections throughout the world and have helped to point out when they are fraudulent and when they are legitimate. Most recently, in the Ukrainian presidential election, international monitors helped to prove election fraud, which led to a new election, and a different turnout. Just the day before yesterday the world watched President Viktor Yushchenko's inauguration, which would have never happened without the presence of election observers.

In previous transitional elections across the world, the international community has sent teams of observers to polling sites. In the 1999 Nigerian national election, there were approximately 2,000 international observers. In the 1990 Haitian presidential election, there were 1,000 international observers. In the 2001-2002 elections in East Timor for the constituent assembly and presidency, there were 1,000 international observers. In the recent second presidential runoff in Ukraine, when many feared the country was on the brink of chaos, there were over 12,000 international observers. In each of these elections international monitors helped to increase voter participation, promote confidence among the voting population, and deter fraud. Moreover, they independently certified elections to be legitimate, for the citizens of the respective countries, and for the world community.

Organizations that have typically sent monitoring delegations in the past are not sending any observers for the January 30th elections in Iraq. The European Union, the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe are not sending delegations. There are no U.S. congressional delegations. The Carter Center, which has participated in the observation of over 50 elections abroad, has refused to send monitors. The International Mission for Iraqi Elections, led by Canada's chief electoral officer, Jean-Pierre Kingsley, and comprised of less than two dozen election experts from Australia, Bangladesh, Britain, Canada, Ghana, Hungary, Indonesia, Mexico, Panama and Yemen, will not monitor the elections directly in Iraq. They will instead operate from Amman, Jordan. They have said, according to the Washington Post, that they are planning to send one outsider to evaluate the balloting. Frankly, while that one observer should be admired, especially considering the dangerous security situation, one observer is not capable of determining the fairness of a national election. Kingsley is not even calling the mission an "observation mission," but rather an "assessment mission." While this mission will audit election data provided by Iraq, it will not be on site to independently determine whether ballot boxes are stuffed, votes are counted correctly, or if voters are hindered from coming to their polling stations.

There are reports that an estimated 6,000 Iraqi first-time monitors will be present at the polling stations. Can they perform the function international monitors are unwilling to perform? Objectively, they cannot. There are 14 million eligible Iraqi voters, which translates to one Iraqi monitor for every 2,300 voters. That figure is wildly disproportionate to the monitor-voter ratios in other recent comparable transitional elections. For example, in the recent Afghani elections, there were 122 European and Asian monitors, 5,300 domestic monitors, 22,000 party agents and 52,000 candidate agents, for 8 million voters, which yields approximately 1 observer or agent for every 100 voters. In the recent Palestinian elections, there were 800 international monitors and 21,000 domestic monitors for 1 million voters, yielding 1 monitor for every 46 voters.

Essentially, it will be impossible to verify the fairness of the election in Iraq.

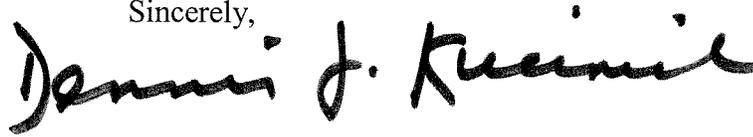
I realize that international monitors have declined to come to Iraq because of the appalling security situation there. Nevertheless, it is not acceptable to stage an election that cannot be monitored for fairness. It is also obvious that a security situation that is too dangerous for international election monitors is too dangerous for Iraqis themselves.

Human Rights Watch has concluded that the Iraqi elections will not likely be free and fair because,

"The security situation has overshadowed every aspect of the elections. The violence and threats of attacks by insurgent groups have severely restricted Iraqi citizens' right to assembly, association, movement, and expression. Significant parts of the electorate will be unable to participate because of violence and intimidation. Given that many political entities cannot campaign freely and many voters are afraid or unable to register or vote, the Iraqi elections many not accurately express the political will of the people."

If, as Human Rights Watch concludes, conditions in Iraq today are not conducive to free and fair elections, what real accomplishment can the United States claim for the cost in blood and treasure this war has imposed? I hope the Administration does not engage in wishful thinking that this farce of an election can beget anything other than farce. What a disservice we do to Iraqis who risk danger to cast their votes or run for office in this irredeemable formality. And what distortion of real democracy is being done in America's name: It will surely discredit the United States in the eyes of the world.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dennis J. Kucinich". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Dennis J. Kucinich
Member of Congress

cc: Ambassador John Negroponte