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Election Commission's Dialogue with Civil Society: MOVE's 8-Point Proposal

1. Ensuring Accountability of the Election Commission:

- i) Elements, criteria and yardstick of a credible election should be defined clearly by the Election Commission as per Bangladesh standard.
- ii) Confidence building measures like Third Party monitoring and auditing of the activities including execution of the published Roadmap of the Election Commission is required to increase acceptability of their work, and publish progress reports in every two months to keep people updated.

2. Providing Digitized Voter Number instead of Hand-written Voter Slip to Reduce Election Expenses:

Candidates spend a lot of money and human resources to print, write and deliver slips containing polling center information to the voters. To reduce expenses, the Election Commission with the help of the BTRC, NID Authority and mobile operators can send center-wise voter numbers in mobile phones and hang the printed pages in nationwide well-spread offices of the EC and the Union Information Centers.

3. Guidelines for Electoral Alliance Formation and Use of Party Symbol:

- i) Signboard only or one-man political parties or junior members of the coalition remain busy in horse-trading and blackmailing the dominant party till the last moment for nomination and benefits, and in most cases, change their long-lasting coalition partner for better deals rather than on policy ground. This creates confusion, sends a wrong signal to the voters and sometimes put the whole election in jeopardy. To stop this malpractice, a guideline for election-time alliance is required under which the coalition shall submit their members' final list to the EC there (03) months prior to the election.
- ii) Contesting of a registered political party member using symbol of another registered political party needs to be stopped permanently. Getting elected using symbol of one party and then representing original party in the parliament is a kind of cheating the electorates and contradictory to parliamentary norms.

4. Formulating Election-time Social Media Usage Guideline:

A guideline is required to stop propaganda, hate speech, personal attack, misuse of religion and religious values, and abuse of minority and religious people in social media. Complaints should be examined by competent forensic, IT and legal experts. Cancellation of candidature and other criminal charges should be brought against the offender. On the other hand, harassing people using ICT Act on fictitious ground should be mentioned as a criminal offence.

5. Reforming Candidature Law:

- i) Convicted war criminals and immediate family members of the convicted war criminals shall be disqualified for elections at any level – so that as a lawmaker they do not get the chance to influence the judicial process or overturn the outcome of the verdicts.
- ii) A person who has resigned, retired or dismissed from the service of the Republic or of any statutory public authority or of the defence service, unless a period of five years has elapsed since the date of his resignation or retirement shall be disqualified for any election. At the same time, partisan civil servants should be identified and kept away from election duty so that they cannot influence the outcome of the election.

6. Appointing Non-controversial Returning Officers:

- i) To avoid controversy, returning Officers should be appointed from among the competent election commission officials alongside the administrative cadre officials. Initiatives should be taken to introduce a separate Election Cadre in the Bangladesh Civil Service so that election commission officials can work at par with the admin and other relevant cadres.

7. Ensuring Uninterrupted Election Observation and Neutrality of the Observer Organizations:

- i) Proper steps for full-proof security be taken and necessary arrangements be made for journalists and short-term & long-term observers for uninterrupted election observation.
- ii) NGOs and institutions run or managed directly or indirectly by politicians or immediate family members of a politician or those which work as 'shadow organization' of political parties should not be enlisted as election observer organization.

8. Introducing Staggered Election and Proportional Voting System:

- i) Keeping in mind the trend of electoral violence, threat of global terrorism and deficiency of the law enforcement agencies, the EC should consider holding staggered elections for better management and safety.
- ii) To lessen the influence of black money, and reduce the nomination trade and use of muscle power, the EC should consider introducing proportional voting system.