

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 28, 2024

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

The Honorable Antony Blinken
United States Secretary of State
The State Department
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden and Secretary Blinken,

We write to express our concerns about pre- and post-poll rigging in Pakistan's recent parliamentary elections. We appreciate the steps your administration has already taken to draw attention to interference in these elections. Your administration has rightly stood behind the "credible international and local election observers" who documented "undue restrictions on freedoms of expression, association, and peaceful assembly," and we join you in "condemn[ing] electoral violence, restrictions on the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including attacks on media workers, and restrictions on access to the Internet and telecommunication services."¹ Given these concerns, we urge you to:

1. withhold recognition of a new government in Pakistan until a thorough, transparent, and credible investigation of election interference has been conducted;
2. urge Pakistani authorities to release anyone who has been detained for engaging in political speech or activity, and task State Department officials in Pakistan with gathering information about such cases and advocating for their release; and
3. make clear to Pakistani authorities that U.S. law provides for accountability for acts that violate human rights, undermine democracy, or further corruption, including the potential for military and other cooperation to be halted.

Prior to the elections on February 8th, former Prime Minister Imran Khan was sentenced to prison terms of 10 years and 14 years on questionable charges² of leaking state secrets and corruption. Members of his party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), were forced to run as independents and prohibited from using the PTI party symbol on the ballot,³ despite consistently polling as the most popular party in the country.⁴ Leading up to the election, PTI members faced police raids, arrests, and harassment.⁵ On the day of the election, Pakistani authorities suspended mobile calls and data, making it harder for voters to find polling stations.⁶ While the pre-poll rigging efforts rightly received widespread international and domestic condemnation, attention has now turned to widespread allegations of post-poll rigging.

¹ "Elections in Pakistan," U.S. Department of State, February 9, 2024, <https://www.state.gov/elections-in-pakistan/>.

² Ryan Grim and Murtaza Hussain, "Secret Pakistan Document Undermines Espionage Case Against Imran Khan," *The Intercept*, December 18, 2023, <https://theintercept.com/2023/12/18/pakistan-cypher-imran-khan-charges/>.

³ "Pakistan's Elections Are Being Brazenly Rigged. Why Doesn't the U.S. Seem to Care?," *TIME*, February 5, 2024, <https://time.com/6663747/pakistan-imran-khan-election-democracy-us/>.

⁴ "Gallup Pakistan Political Weather Report: 1 month before the General Election 2024," Gallup Pakistan, January 2024, <https://gallup.com.pk/post/35889>.

⁵ Ryan Grim, "8 Flagrant Ways the U.S.-backed Government in Pakistan is Subverting the Election," *The Intercept*, February 7, 2024, <https://theintercept.com/2024/02/07/pakistan-election-pti-imran-khan/>.

⁶ Yvette Tan, Caroline Davies and Simon Fraser, "Pakistan elections 2024: Polls close in vote marred by mobile shutdown," *BBC News*, February 8, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-68226228>.

Concerns arose after delays in reporting final results⁷ and early returns showed PTI-backed candidates on a path to victory.⁸ Over the coming days and weeks, previously reported vote totals allegedly changed dramatically,⁹ while video evidence emerged on social media of purported abuses by security forces and election officials at polling stations, as results were delayed well past legal deadlines.

Findings by nonpartisan observers also lend credibility to these concerns. According to the Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN), which is nonpartisan but has worked closely with election authorities, more than two-thirds of polling sites suffered from the kinds of election law violations that could have enabled changing outcomes of races.¹⁰ The dispute revolves around discrepancies between the polling center results that were issued to candidates (on a document known as “Form 45”), and the final constituency-wide tally (known as the “Form 47”). These findings were echoed by other respected election monitors and human rights organizations,¹¹ as well as the nation’s newspaper of record, which explained in a February 20 editorial that “independent observers, candidates, and accredited media personnel reported being excluded or evicted from the Form 47 compilation process” meant that “the most important check on the process was bypassed without any convincing explanation.”¹² This growing body of evidence and diversity of voices has led many of the leading observers, human rights organizations, and media organizations to call for a transparent, credible audit process to verify the true outcome of the election.¹³

Given the strong evidence of pre- and post-poll rigging, we urge you to wait until a thorough, transparent, and credible investigation has been conducted before recognizing a new Pakistani government. Without taking this necessary step, you risk enabling anti-democratic behavior by Pakistani authorities and could undermine the democratic will of the Pakistani people.¹⁴

Pakistan is a long-standing ally of the United States, and we recognize the importance of our relationship for regional stability and counterterrorism efforts. It is in the U.S. interest to ensure that democracy thrives in Pakistan and that election results reflect the interests of the Pakistani people, not the interests of the Pakistani elite and military. We look forward to working with you to show Pakistanis that the U.S. stands with them in their fight for democracy and human rights.

Sincerely,

⁷ Asif Shahzad and Ariba Shahid, “Pakistan vote counts drags on after election marred by attacks, outages,” *Reuters*, February 8, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/pakistan-votes-amid-polarisation-militant-attacks-economic-crisis-2024-02-07/>.

⁸ Ryan Grim, “Historic Turnout in Pakistan is Swamping the Military’s Effort to Rig the Election,” *The Intercept*, February 9, 2024, <https://theintercept.com/2024/02/09/pakistan-election-military-pti/>.

⁹ *Ibid.*

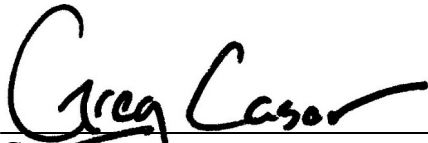
¹⁰ “FAFEN Urges ECP to Take Notice of Non-Adherence to Legal Requirements by ROs in Results Tabulation,” Free and Fair Election Network, February 12, 2024, <https://fafen.org/fafen-urges-ecp-to-take-notice-of-non-adherence-to-legal-requirements-by-ros-in-results-tabulation/>.

¹¹ “Open the Books,” *Dawn*, February 20, 2024, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1815651>.

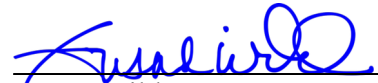
¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Ikram Junaidi, “Elections have lost credibility entirely, says Pattan,” *Dawn*, February 19, 2024, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1815313/elections-have-lost-credibility-entirely-says-pattan>.


¹⁴ “Pakistan’s shocking election result shows authoritarians don’t always win,” Washington Post Editorial Board, February 11, 2024, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2024/02/11/pakistan-military-elections-authoritarianism-imran-khan/>.




Greg Casar
Member of Congress



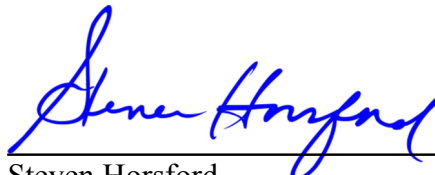
Susan Wild
Member of Congress



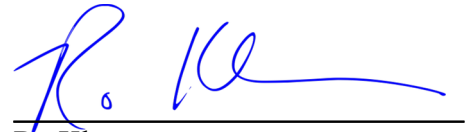
Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress




Summer L. Lee
Member of Congress



Steven Horsford
Member of Congress




Ro Khanna
Member of Congress




James P. McGovern
Member of Congress




André Carson
Member of Congress



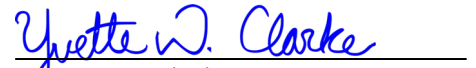
Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.
Member of Congress




Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress




David J. Trone
Member of Congress




Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress



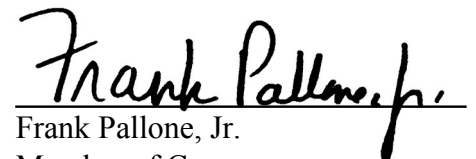
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



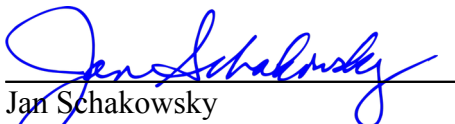
Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress




Barbara Lee
Member of Congress




Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress




Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



Cori Bush
Member of Congress



Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress



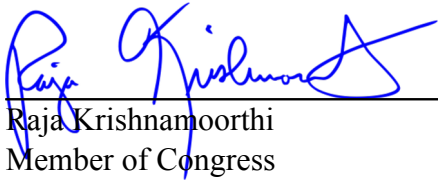
Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress



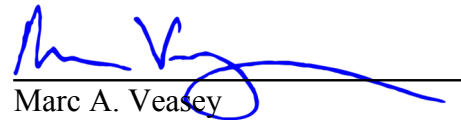
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



Marc A. Veasey
Member of Congress



Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress



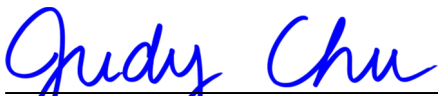
Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress



Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



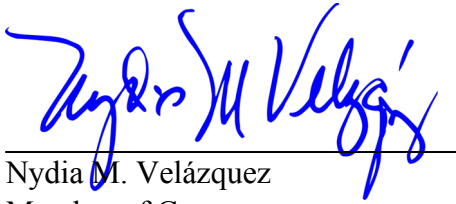
Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress



Judy Chu
Member of Congress



Greg Landsman
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Nydia M. Velázquez". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath it.

Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress