

## [Uncontested Council election raises concerns about the integrity of its membership](#)

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- Africa: Angola (re-elected), Libya, Mauritania, Uganda
- Asia: Qatar (re-elected), Malaysia, Thailand, Maldives
- Eastern Europe: Moldova, Poland
- Latin America and Caribbean: Ecuador, Guatemala
- Western Europe and Others: Switzerland, Spain

For the first time since 2006 when the Council was established, each of the five geographic regions that receive an allocation of seats on the Council ran 'closed slates' where the number of candidates matched the number of available seats. Given the trend towards 'clean slates' in successive Council elections, non-competitive elections now appear to be a fixture. This sends a message to States with poor human rights records that they can negotiate with their regional counterparts to all but guarantee themselves a seat, well in advance of the vote in the General Assembly.

The absence of competition from the election process raises concerns that one of the key mechanisms devised to distinguish the Council from its beleaguered predecessor, the Commission on Human Rights, has been circumvented by States. This not only damages the credibility of the Council, it also casts a shadow over its ability to fulfill its mandate to 'promote universal respect for the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all'.

Although NGOs mounted a concerted international campaign to encourage more States to run for election, the absence of competition goes against the spirit and the letter of the resolution that established the Council. [Resolution 60/251](#) requires not only that members of the Council shall uphold the 'highest standards' of human rights and 'fully cooperate' with the Council, but also that members of the General Assembly consider the voluntary pledges and commitments States submit with their candidacy to show how they will improve the promotion and protection of human rights domestically and internationally. Qatar and Uganda were the only two States that failed to submit any documentation to support their candidacy, thus depriving all States of the ability to even assess their eligibility.

Libya's election to the Council has come under particular criticism from human rights organisations around the world, and this likely played a part in delivering Libya the lowest election vote of all 14 contenders (155 votes from 188 ballots). Prior to the election, the [NGO coalition for an effective Human Rights Council](#) advised that Angola, Malaysia, Thailand and Uganda also failed to meet the threshold for eligibility for election to the Council. However, Iran's decision to withdraw its candidacy in April was welcomed by many, including the US Government and civil society, both of which campaigned against its membership.

The election result in the General Assembly was also disappointing in another respect. The secret ballot process allows the 192-member body to withhold votes from those candidates that do not meet the threshold for election to the Council, thereby ensuring that competition is still possible, even when 'clean slates' abound. If any candidate fails to attain an absolute majority (97 votes) after three rounds of voting, the ballot is opened up to other candidates. However, as the vote tally below indicates, member states did not use this rule of procedure to inject an element of competition back into the vote. Rather, votes ranged from a high of 185 for the Maldives, to a low of 155 for Libya, with a total of 22 abstentions across all regions.

Region	Candidate states and their vote (from 188 ballots)	Abstentions
Africa	Angola (170) Libya (155) Mauritania (167) Uganda (164)- no pledge	5
Asia	Maldives (185) Malaysia (179) Thailand (182) Qatar (177) - no pledge	0
Eastern Europe	Moldova (175) Poland (171)	8
Latin America and Caribbean	Ecuador (180) Guatemala (180)	3
Western Europe and Others	Spain (177) Switzerland (175)	6

- For more information on the election procedure and voting procedure for the Human Rights Council, see Issue 139 of [UNelections.org](http://UNelections.org), a project of WFM-IGP.
- The current membership of the Council, as well as the voluntary pledges and commitments of candidates for election to the Council in 2010 are posted on the [General Assembly's website](#).