

Both Karzai and Abdullah claim victory

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Hamid Karzai's campaign chief says that incumbent president has secured the outright majority in Afghanistan's presidential elections, but his main rival rejects the claim.

Din Mohammad said initial results showed the incumbent president had gotten a majority of the votes.

"Initial results show that the president has got a majority. We will not go to a second round. We have got a majority."

He emphasized that Karzai had secured the outright majority needed to avoid a run-off in October.

A spokesman for Karzai's main rival, Abdullah Abdullah, has meanwhile dismissed the remarks, saying Abdullah is leading the votes.

Abdullah the main challenger to incumbent president Hamid Karzai has issued a statement detailing about 40 incidents of alleged irregularities. Abdullah says officials have pressured people to vote for Karzai.

The claims and counter claims come as ballot papers are being counted after polling stations were closed in Afghanistan's presidential and provincial elections on late Thursday.

Meanwhile, election authorities have launched an investigation into several complaints of irregularities.

The election authority said Friday ballot counting in the country's presidential election was over. "The counting is finished for the presidential race."

The official results are expected to be released next week and turnout expected at 40 to 50 percent, according to election commission officials.

Observers, however, expect the number to be far lower. Many independent reports also suggested a slow start to voting.

The vote was held amid tight security due to threats from Taliban militants. But Afghan authorities say those threats failed to prevent people from turning up.

A number of people were killed on Thursday, including children in rocket attacks that reportedly hit the southern provinces of Kandahar, Ghazni and Helmand, the eastern provinces of Nangarhar, Kunar and Khost, as well as in the north.

However, according to the latest official reports the Election Day saw sporadic violent incidents in which over 26 people were killed. The casualties included civilians, soldiers as well as Taliban insurgents.

The Afghan government had banned covering reports of violence during the voting.

There have been reports of militant attacks in 15 provinces.

The violence in the conflict-torn country is on the rise despite the presence of more than 100,000 US-led soldiers in Afghanistan.

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