



FIRST PERSON Taking Responsibility for Democracy

Nonpartisan observers ensure a free and fair election process



Photo: Adnan Joulani, Tamkeen

“As a Palestinian, these elections are very important to me,” said Khalid, right. “We proved to ourselves and to the world that we have a democratic system and that we can make our choice in a peaceful way.”

Khalid Nassif is one of nearly 120 Palestinians who received training from USAID on how to mount nonpartisan election observation campaigns — from the basics of training and fielding monitors to the complex procedures that should be observed. As Palestinians took to the polls to elect a new leader on January 9, Khalid used the skills he took from the training to lead a team of volunteer observers he had recruited, trained and fielded to polling stations across the West Bank. Juggling two cellular phones that rang every few minutes, he guided their efforts throughout the day — from dawn until the last ballots were counted soon after midnight.

“The observers are taking their responsibilities very seriously to make sure the process is fair,” said Khalid. “As a Palestinian, these elections are very important to me. We proved to ourselves and to the world that we have a democratic system and that we can make our choice in a peaceful way.”

Khalid and his team intend to put their skills to further use, ensuring a free and fair process for future rounds of parliamentary and local elections in the Palestinian territories.