



Fundasaun Mahein (FM), July 31st2017

Press Release

Observation Report for the Parliamentary Election 2017

The Parliamentary Election of July 22nd2017 was conducted peacefully, with Timorese citizens participating enthusiastically in the democratic process, which ran smoothly due to the hard work of Timor-Leste's electoral organs, the National Election Commission (CNE) and the Technical Secretariat for Electoral Administration (STAE). The National Police of Timor-Leste and FALINTIL-Force of Timor-Leste (F-FDTL) also ensured safe and secure elections. National and international media provided coverage of the elections for the public and international stakeholders. The independent monitoring of the national and international observers also played an important role in guaranteeing the legitimacy of the election process.

Fundasaun Mahein's (FM) wants to recognize the efforts made by political party leaders to emphasize the nation's interest and to advocate for peace and stability throughout the campaign. This promotion of peace and stability represents a historical moment in demonstrating the maturity of the Timorese people and their capacity to face and overcome obstacles.

However, during the campaign FM observed some irregularities in campaigning schedules, violations of the roadway code, use of state funds for campaigning, and the closure of public streets due to campaign activities. FM also noted that during political party convoys, supporters were injured in Bobonaro, and one died in Dili.

FM also registered some incidents happened during campaign activities in Viqueque. During KHUNTO's party campaigning, an incident occurred in which some party supporters were injured and some houses were destroyed. However, the police soon arrived to secure the situation. FM believes that this violence was not deliberately orchestrated against other supporters and communities.

Apart from irregularities, FM also wants to highlight the issue of vote-buying or money distribution by political parties. This issue became an important matter that other parties emphasized in their campaigning activities. Yet it is quite hard to prove that votes were bought during the campaigning process, and some political party leaders denied the issue altogether. Another related issue involves the offer of free fueling for people's motorbikes if they participate in the campaigning activities.

FM also noticed that during the campaign some political leaders did not present their own policy programs but instead prefer to criticize other parties' figures who currently work in the government. Furthermore, they compare their own involvement in Timor-Leste's independence struggle with others' level of involvement.

On the Election Day, FM's observation registered irregularities in which political party officials try to influence voters before they go to the voting center to vote. In Dili some drunken political party officials threatened STAE and CNE officials to count the election results soon in the voting center.

FM also registered an incident that occurred on election day in Dili, in which a group of people threatened an F-FDTL member in Fatu-Ahi and tried to provoke them into a fight. At that moment, the military police immediately intervened and arrested one of the people involved. A few days later, on 23rd July 2017 in some hamlets in Dili, a PD supporter threatened a Fretilin supporter about a small bridge built by the PD during the campaign. Another incident involved a Fretilin supporter on a motorbike provoking PD and PLP supporters by screaming "PD is down," leading to some fighting.

Finally, CNE has published the national tabulation, revealing that FRETILIN, CNRT, PLP, PD and KHUNTO have reached the 4% threshold necessary to enter parliament. However, none of them has secured a majority. Consequently, the leaders of these parties must negotiate in order to establish a governing coalition. Consequently, the President of the Republic has invited the five political party leaders to the Presidential Palace to discuss. Each political party's leader has made public announcements about forming the new government but the composition of the coalition remains unclear. The PLP party leader declared that the PLP would become a meaningful opposition force in parliament, while the PD and KHUNTO leaders stressed that their openness to joining a coalition if they receive an invitation. Fretilin has started discussing forming a government with Xanana Gusmao, but the CNRT is still waiting for the party's conference before making a decision.

Recommendations

1. Leaders of political parties should continue improving communication in order to ensure peace and stability during the formation of the government.
2. All people should accept the election result whether they are pleased by it or not, as there will be a new political process with the formation of the government.
3. The CNE and STAE must pay attention to the failures that have been identified in order to improve the electoral organs' performance in future elections.
4. Security actors should continue to work independently in order to maintain security during the formation of the new government.

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