



ALERT

Belun's Early Warning, Early Response (EWER) System

FORTY-ONE MOSTLY MINOR INCIDENTS RECORDED BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Dili, 6 April 2017

Belun's Early Warning, Early Response (EWER) system¹ recorded 41 mostly minor incidents of electoral violence before, during and after the Presidential Election on March 20th. Of those incidents, only six involved the use of physical violence, while the rest involved verbal or symbolic violence (for example, flag burning, vandalizing candidate posters, etc.). EWER monitors recorded thirteen incidents in Dili, eight in Likisá, three in each of Ainaru, Covalima and Manufahi, two in Bobonaru, and one in each of Aileu, Ermera, Lautein, Manatuto and the Oekusi Special Administrative Region.

Various types of incidents were recorded:

- a) In 19 incidents, supporters of opposing candidates provoked each other either during the campaign, the vote-counting period or after the result was announced.
- b) In 8 incidents, voters became angry because they, or electoral officials themselves, did not understand the electoral rules or process. For example, poll workers in Baucau refused to allow F-FDTL soldiers in civilian clothing to vote, which is their right.
- c) In 4 incidents, people became angry when voters knowingly defied electoral rules, for example, by taking photos inside the voting booths, wearing party symbols within the voting centre, etc.)
- d) In 4 incidents, observance or suspicion about irregularities in the voting process led to violence. For example, in Aileu a voter became violent after allegedly receiving four ballots in succession that had already been filled. In another example, voters became angry when it appeared that polling staff were voiding spoiled ballots from some candidates and not others.
- e) In 4 incidents, people grew angry after waiting in long lines.
- f) In 2 incidents, people protested when polling centers were closed before they were able to vote.

Recommendation and Action Immediately before Parliament Election:

Parliament election will compete by approximately 41 political parties, will lead more potential conflicts. Belun recommends:

1. Government through Technical Secretariat for Election Administration (STAE) to evaluate electoral registration system in order to ensure maximum participation of over 17 ages population to vote and for voter to prepare electoral card in proper way in advance and not only blame government on the voting day;
2. Government through STAE to review numbers of polling station compare to total numbers of voter. Some incidents happened because voter already spent time on the long line but after could not vote because time is over;
3. Government through STAE and its development partners, civil society, NGOs to invest on election socialization, as some incidents occurred in polling stations as voters lacked knowledge of the electoral process;

¹ The EWER system monitors 43 Administrative Posts (out of 65 total) in all 12 Municipalities and the Oekusi Autonomous Special Region.



4. Government through National Electoral Commission (CNE) and its development partners to invest more in civic education, to increase voters understanding of the democratic election system so that incidents of provocation among militants can be reduced;
5. Political leaders and success teams to show their best leadership on managing their militant as an example of their best political will, because some violence incidents occurred as militants were uncontrolled;
6. Political leaders to only speak out on their programs, vision and mission during the campaign periods and not to make inflammatory comments that may provoke militants to be angry and violent;
7. Recommended to CNE to ensure participation as right of the citizens in the democratization process included stronger observation work in parliament election particularly in the remote areas;
8. National Police (PNTL) to maintain law and order during the campaign and election periods to guarantee security and election freedoms;
9. Recommended to community of Timor Leste to receive lose results as part of democratic values and inform CNE of any alleged irregularities & violations;

Belun will publish a complete Presidential Election monitoring report with data, analysis and recommendations for the July Parliamentary Elections later this month. In the meantime, for more information about the incidents described in this Alert, please visit Belun's Early Warning, Early Response Data Portal at www.atres.belun.tl or contact EWER Program Manager Marilia O. da Costa at bylah.belun@gmail.com.