

# Electoral Violence Monitoring Report for Timor-Leste's 2017 Presidential Election

## A report from Belun's Early Warning, Early Response (EWER) System



NGO Belun's documentation, Campaigns and Presidential Election, 20 March 2017

**Dili, 20 April 2017**  
**NGO Belun**



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## Executive summary

The objective of this report is to show the electoral violence incidents data around and during the Presidential Election that took place on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March 2017. Data presented here is gathered by the EWER system from the monitoring conducted before, during and after election. Data was collected, analyzed, and written into this report, to identify recommendations that are targeted primarily at the government, and particularly to relevant institutions such as Ministry of State Administration (MSA), National Electoral Commission (NEC) and the Secretariat for Electoral Administration (STAE).

Based on result of the analysis from Belun's monitoring of electoral violence incidents, there are 41 incidents recorded in the election period but those incidents are mostly categorized as minor incidents. Results from the analysis of conflict potential of the presidential election on 20 March 2017 corresponded to Belun's assessment report on the potential for electoral violence, which showed that "there is low conflict potential, and only minor conflict may occur".

Incidents of violence occurred in the Presidential Election in 2012 was 82 incidents, while compared to presidential election in 2017 is 41 incidents. This shows that only half of total incidents in 2012 occurred the Presidential Election in 2017 (although there were two rounds in 2012 and only one in 2017).

## Key recommendations

- CNE should ensure participation and citizens rights in the democratic process, including strong observation to the upcoming parliamentary election, particularly in the rural area;
- PNTL should continue to maintain law and order during the campaign and election process in order to ensure stability and free election;
- Political leaders should campaign about political programs, vision, and mission not defaming others, to provoke violence between militants, and to party leaders and the campaign teams, to know that the capacity to manage militants is one of the indicators for future governance, because many incidents took place due the militants not being able to control themselves;
- Political party leaders should not transport mass of supporter and militants from one place or municipality to another municipality, which is a key source of tension;

## Introduction

Timor-Leste already conducted Presidential Election four times start from 2002; 2007; 2012 and now the election of 2017. The objective of this report is to identify the areas of conflict during the March 2017 Presidential Election so that Belun and other stakeholder to know and organize peace related activity, also to consider response to key and general recommendation to prevent electoral violence in the parliamentary election in the month of July 2017.

Based on the monitoring result of EWER system, by using tablet computer device, the system detected incidents of electoral violence of 41 in 12 municipalities, including in Special Autonomous Region Oecusse Ambeno (RAEOA), and in 43 Administrative Post (Administrative Post). Starting from Presidential Campaign, from 3 until 17 of March 2017, there were total incidents 10; during voting on the 20 of March 2017 there were 16 incidents, and after voting finished and in the days after the election there 15 incidents, though all were mostly minor incidents. With this data it shows this election is a successful one because there are no any serious incidents. Compared to the report from 'Election Observation Mission of European Union; Observatório da Igreja Para os Assuntos Sociais (OIPAS), NGO La'ó Hamutuk revealed that all the election process starting from the campaign until the election result of the Presidential Election on 20 of March 2017 are went well and peaceful<sup>1</sup>.

## Methodology

NGO Belun and its EWER system conducted monitoring on violent incidents with the focus on Presidential Election in the period of 2017. The monitoring system use computer tablet from Belun's Municipal Coordinator to update or sending incidents data directly to Belun's online data portal system ([www.atres.belun.tl](http://www.atres.belun.tl)) that gathered data from 86 EWER monitors (64 men and 22 women) from 43 Administrative Post. In each Administrative Post have 2 monitors that monitor violent incidents, including violence related to election and general social conflict, and they are also observing changes that occurring at the community level, including economic, socio-cultural, politics and externally-caused changes.

At the national level, EWER management team compiles the data, analyzes it and produces reports. The report will include a section about recommendations that will be used for advocacy to the government, local and international stakeholders in Timor-Leste.

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<sup>1</sup> 1). First preliminary declaration on 22 March 2017 – Timor-Leste presidential election well conducted and peaceful from European Union; 2). Press Conference on Presidential Election 2017 from OIPAS; no 3). Observation Report on Presidential Election for the Period of 2017-2022 from NGO La'ó Hamutuk.

## Data and analysis

Based on monitoring result, Belun, via its Early Warning and Early Response (EWER)<sup>2</sup> system recorded 41 electoral violence occurred 'before, during and after' voting in the Presidential Election on the 20 March 2017.

### Use of Physical Violence

From these total incidents, 8 incidents use physical force by the way of physical assault, throwing stone, and destruction of political party attributes. The rest of electoral violence incidents are involving verbal violence such as brawling quarrel, disputes, and shouting on each other.

From the physical incidents, 3 incidents occurred before election and during the campaign, 2 in Comoro village, Dili, and 1 in Fatuhada village Dili.

2 incidents occurred during election: 1 of them in Maumeta village of Atauro, and another 1 in Leotela village in Post Administrative Likisá.

3 incidents occurred after election: 2 incidents took place during the time of vote counting in Gricenfor village of the Administrative Post Nain Feto. Another 1 took place in the village Letefoho, Administrative Post of Same – Manufahi. Another incident occurred after voting or announcement of result took place in the village of Debos, in Suai's Administrative Post.

To know more please see Table A and for details please read the incidents chronology below:

1. On the 3 March 2017, around 6 p.m. militants and supporters of Presidential Candidates involved in confrontation that took place in Raikotu, Terra Santa hamlet, Comoro Village, Post Administrative Dom Aleixo, Municipality of Dili. This incident occurs when militants and supporters from one of the candidates returned from the campaign in Ermera Municipal, and when the campaigners approach Tasi Tolu, provocation took place and they involved in the confrontation. In this incident, crowds were trying to put on fire to a motorbike and chasing each other, which had created fear and panic in that community. This incident caused the destruction of window glasses of few houses nearby. Police arrived on the scene and intervened. This case is now under investigation.
2. On the 17 March 2017, around 7 p.m., in Bee Horis Hamlet, Fatuhada village, Post Administrative Dom Aleixo, Municipality of Dili, militants and supporters of two presidential candidates throwing stones at each other. This incident took place when campaigners returned from the public campaign in Tasi Tolu on caravan, they provoked each other and at the end they were throwing stone at each other. There were no one wounded in this incident because the police intervened and separated the crowd.



Munisipiu	Antes	Durante	Depois	Total
Manufahi			1	1
Covalima			1	1
Dili	3	1	1	5
Likisá		1		1
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>

<sup>2</sup> Early Warning, Early Response (EWER) covers 43 Administrative Post (from the total of 65), 275 villages (from the total of 442) in 12 Municipalities ad Special Autonomous Region Oekusi Ambeno.

3. On the 12 March 2017, around 5.30 p.m. youth are throwing stone at each other in the hamlet Baya Leste, Comoro village, Post Administrative Dom Aleixo, Municipality of Dili. This incident took place because of brawls regarding political party. No physical impact happened in this brawls because community members, Village Council's member and Police intervened and the youth were dispersed.
4. On the 20 March 2017, around 10 a.m., militants of a political party assaulted and threat community in the hamlet Lepa, Leotela village, Post Administrative Likisá, Municipality of Likisá. In this incident, militants of a political party assaulted militants of another party and threat the community. They were also tore down attributes of a political party in one of the house. This case already reported to the police and now it is under investigation.
5. On the 20 March 2017, around 12 midday, in the hamlet Eclae, Maumeta Vila village, Post Administrative Atauro, Municipality of Dili, brothers were spilling the voting ink on each other. This event took place due to personal problem between the two brothers since long time. Police and Polling Staff intervened but the conflicted parties are not accepting each other.
6. On the 20 March 2017, around 5 p.m., a member of PNTL beat 3 young men in the Primary School (Xina), Grilos hamlet, Gricenfor village, Post Administrative Na'in Feto, Municipality of Dili. The incident took place during the vote counting time, but the 3 drunken young men made clamorous noise with their motorbike and shouting radically. Police intervened, beat the 3 young men, and asked them to go home.
7. On the 25 March 2017, around 10.30 p.m. a man beat his young brother in the hamlet Tabako Lot, Debos village, Postu Administrativu Suai, Municipality of Covalima. This incident starts from drinking together. When they got drunk they started to have political arguments, one of them disagreed therefore they end up fighting. Relatives and friends intervened and they solved the problem afterwards.

#### **Incident causes**

1. In 19 incidents, militants of opposing candidates provoked each other either during the campaign, the vote-counting period or after the result was announced. (For example: quarrel, brawls until fighting and throwing stone at each other);
2. In 8 incidents, voters and electoral officials did not understand the electoral rules or process, (For example: Official of the Voting Center refused to allow F-FDTL soldiers in civilian clothing to vote);
3. In 4 incidents, some voters knows the election rules but defied them (for example, by taking photos of the voting paper inside the voting booths, and came to vote with political party attribute);
4. In 4 incidents, observance or suspicion about irregularities in the voting process (For example, voting paper has inked and voted before the voter vote, changes for 3 times but the same voting paper that the voter received. Also a vote was null but suspected for discrimination);
5. In 4 incidents, people grew angry after waiting in long lines;
6. In 2 incidents, voters do not know the voting time and place to vote (For example: voters already queuing in long line but could not vote because the voting station closed 3pm sharp. This act incite argument between voters and official of the voting center)

## Incident locations

The diagram to the right shows the descending level of incidents based of municipalities. The highest level is Dili with total incidents of 13, second highest position is Likisá with the total incidents of 8 and the third highest level is Baukau with the total incidents 4. The municipals with incidents less than 3 are Aileu, Ermera, Lautem, Manatuto and Oekusse with only 1 incident for each municipality. Municipal Bobonaro only has 2 incidents but the municipality of Ainaru, Covalima no Manufahi, each have 3 incidents that took place in their area. Interestingly, in the Municipal of Vikeké, for the first time ever in the 3 periodical presidential elections, the area has no electoral violence related incidents.

When counted based on Administrative Post level, Dom Aleixo has 8; Baukau Vila 4; Bazartete, Likisa Vila and Same have 3. Zumalai, Vera Cruz, Pante Makasar, Lospalos, Lacro, Ermera, Cristo Rei, Atauro, Ainaro Vila no Aileu Vila each of them have 1 incident. Suai, Nain Feto, Maubise, Maubara and Atabae Postu Administrativu have 2 incidents.

### Incidents during the campaign

Based on table -1, it shows that 10 incidents took place during the campaign or before election, start from Friday, 3 March, on 9 a.m. until 7 p.m. on the 17 March 2017. These incidents are mostly happened in Dili, with 4 incidents. Ainaru, Baukau, Ermera and Oekusse each with 2 incidents. No incidents occurred in the other municipalities during that period.

### Incidents on the day of Presidential Election

Based on the table 2, 16 incidents took place on the 20 March 2017, from 7 a.m. until 3 p.m. Most of these incidents occurred in Dili and Likisá with 4 incidents in each municipality. From the 16 incidents, only 2 incidents were physical assault and they were happened in both places, Dili and Likisá. The rest of 14 incidents were verbal violence, and they were mostly happened in the voting station.

### Incidents during vote counting and after election day

The table 3 indicated that 14 incidents took place after election, after 15:00 p.m. onwards, until 24:00 a.m. These 14 incidents were happened during the vote counting period. From 21 until 24 of March 2017, there was no incidents took place. Only one incident took place on the 25 March 2017 in Debos village, Suai Covalima. Together with this incident, total incidents that occurred after election was 15.

## Comparative Analysis with 2012 Presidential Election

Comparing electoral violence incidents of the 2012 and 2017 presidential election, number of electoral violence was higher in the 2012 presidential election, which was 82 incidents (34 incidents in the first round and 48 incidents in the second round). In recent presidential election only 41 incidents took place, but it was only one round election.

**Tabela-1: Tempo Kampana, dia 3 - 17 Marsu 2017, husi oras 0:00 to'o 24:00**

Munisipiu	Insidente
Dili	4
Liquica	2
Ainaro	1
Baukau	1
Ermera	1
Oekusi	1
<b>Totál Jerál</b>	<b>10</b>

**Tabela-2: Iha tempu votasaun, 20 Marsu 2017 husi oras 7:00 - 15:00**

Munisipiu	Insidente
Dili	4
Liquica	4
Baukau	2
Manufahi	2
Aileu	1
Bobonaro	1
Covalima	1
Manatuto	1
<b>Totál Jerál</b>	<b>16</b>

**Tabela-3: Depois de Votasaun**

20 Marsu 2017 husi Oras 15:15 - 23:34		25 Marsu 2017 iha Oras 22:30	Totál Jerál
Munisipiu	Insidente	Insidente	Insidente
Dili	5		5
Ainaro	2		2
Liquica	2		2
Baukau	1		1
Bobonaro	1		1
Covalima	1	1	2
Lautem	1		1
Manufahi	1		1
<b>Totál Jerál</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>15</b>

## Conclusion and Recommendations for Immediate Action

Based on Belun's analysis, with the occurrence of 41 incidents, and also the result from the conflict potential analysis from the presidential election on the 20 March 2017, revealed that electoral violence that happened corresponded with Belun's assessment report on electoral violence. This assessment made a forecast that, "major conflict potential is low". The similar indication showed by the Preliminary Report from the Observation of the European Union, which says that, the presidential election was well conducted and peaceful.<sup>3</sup>

This shows that democratic process in Timor-Leste started to shed positive light when compare to other post conflict countries in the world. According to international pattern, if invalid voting paper is over 2 % when compared to total votes in a general election (Presidential and Parliamentary) then it indicates that the election is not a successful one. However, the reality demonstrated that the presidential election in 20 March 2017 have less than 2% of the invalid voting papers, which means that this election have a great success.

However, there were some concerning incidents of electoral violence, especially in Dili. Based on the result of the analysis with the reason why the Municipality of Dili has the highest incidents compared to the other municipalities. Data shows that movements of militants between the opposing candidates are higher in Dili in this presidential election, particularly for the young supporters that like to clamor with their motorbikes and convoying around the town. On the other hand, it is also clearly noted that large number of supporters traveled from Dili to the other place (Dili to Ermera) to participate in the campaign. The case of the incident in Rai Kotu, Comoro village, call attention to the opposing supporters of presidential candidates to start provoking each other.

Those incidents took place because between militants or supporters provoked each other during the time of the campaign and vote counting by brawling, shouting until some of them threw stone and fought each other. Moreover, voters and officials at the voting stations also did not know well about rules and election process. Some voters aware of the election rules but did not want follow them by coming to the voting station with political party attribute. The last indication of conflict was about voters who did not have information about voting time frame.

In the Parliamentary Election there will be 31 political parties going to participate and compete, and this may cause potential conflict. Therefore, Belun recommends to:

1. Government through STAE to review number of voting stations because some voters were already queuing in the long line but at the end they were not allowed to vote because the voting times is over;
2. Government through STAE with its development partners, civil society, NGOs to invest on the socialization process to reduce incidents that happened due to incomprehension of the voters to the election process, in which at the end it led to violent incidents in the voting stations;
3. National Election Commission with its development partners to invest and prioritize civic education for voters so that they understand well the democratic system in the election system to reduce incidents that occurred due to provocation;
4. National Election Commission to ensure participation and rights of citizens in the democratic process, including provide more strong observation in the upcoming parliamentary election, particularly in the rural area;
5. Political leaders only campaign about their programs, vision and mission, not defaming others and provoke violent incidents between the militants;

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<sup>3</sup> Preliminary report, 22 March 2017, from the European Union Observation Timor-Leste, Presidential and Legislative Election, 2017.

6. Political leaders to not transporting mass of supporters and militants from one place or municipality to another place or municipality, in order to reduce tensions and traffic accidents;
7. PNTL to continue maintain law and order during the campaign and election process in order to guarantee stability and freedom during election;
8. PNTL to continue showing impartiality in the provision of security in all the election process, particularly in the campaign event of all political parties
9. PNTL to strengthening coordination with CNE and STAE in regards to campaign schedule, and also ensure security of the voting box in the melioration process.
10. Population of Timor-Leste to be patience and accept the election result, also, if there are irregularities do present them to the CNE.

Belun's Early Warning, Early Response (EWER) system will continue observing during the parliamentary election period which will be organized in the coming July 2017. After Belun compiles all the data, analyze them, and write a report on it, the report will then submitted to development partners, particularly to the decision makers in the government. Submission of the report and its recommendations will be followed up with a national seminar. Furthermore, Belun will conduct advocacy work with the relevant institutions such Ministry of State Administration, the National Election Commission and the Technical Secretariat for Election Administration.