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Belun
Hamutuk Hakbi'it Komunitade

Report on Electoral Violence Monitoring During the 2017 Parliamentary Election

Early Warning, Early Response (EWER) System



Dili, 18 August 2017
NGO Belun

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Executive summary

The objective of this report is to show data on electoral violence incidents from the 2017 parliamentary election, data that the Early Warning Early Response (EWER) system or AtReS collected through monitoring that took place “before”, “during” and “after” the election. This was followed by compilation, data analysis and report writing wherein recommendations were identified for submission to the government, particularly to the National Election Commission or Comissão Nacional de Eleições (hereinafter referred to as CNE), Election Administration Technical Secretariate (hereinafter referred to as STAE) and other relevant institutions including the national parliament, the Ministry of State Administration and the office of the Ombudsman for improvement of future elections.

Main conclusions

Based on Belun’s analysis of monitoring results, the number of electoral violence incidents registered was 52 during the consolidation, campaign and election period, most of which were categorized as not too serious. However, there were few notable incidents detailed below, including altercations and destruction of property. Analysis of monitoring results from the 2017 parliamentary election mostly reflected Belun’s previous report on assessment of conflict potential related to election, released in March 2017, which showed that “there would be no serious conflict but slight or insignificant incidents”.

Comparative notes

The number of incidents registered during the June 30 2007 parliamentary election was 162 in total, including electoral crimes and irregularities. During the July 22 2012 parliamentary election period, 46 violent incidents, 11 electoral crimes and 19 irregularities were registered,¹ creating a total of 76 incidents in 2012. 52 incidents in total were registered in 2017, including 21 related to people arguing or shouting at one another (verbal violence). 24 incidents involved physical altercation among militants and supporters of political parties, and 7 incidents related to physical actions against belongings or attributes of political parties. Overall seriousness of incidents has reduced since 2012.

Key Recommendations

- To reduce provocations among militants of political parties, particularly during political campaigning, it is recommended to CNE and STAE to carry out socialization or provide clear guidance on rules governing political campaigning to leaders of political parties so that they can guide their supporters, particularly those in vulnerable areas to avoid violence and minimize conflict potential during political campaigning;
- With regards to concerns that many voters did not understand electoral processes, which Belun’s data recognises could lead to violent incidents occurring at polling centres/stations, it is recommended to CNE and STAE to establish clear rules on appropriate conduct in polling stations. Rules on appropriate conduct in polling stations should be in writing and posted at every polling station, possibly providing a brief 5-minute read and explanation of the rules to voters before voting starts so that voters understand processes involved in elections;
- Belun recommends to leaders of political parties to continue with the same mode of political campaigning, where supporters are gathered in one place only and the practice

¹ Electoral crime and irregularities by type of electoral crimes in Timor-Leste Penal Code, Article 229-242.

of transporting supporters en masse from one place to another (from administrative post to municipal) should be discontinued due to potential for traffic accidents and provocations among supporters from different political parties on their way to political campaigning or rallying sites;

- It is recommended to CNE together with local government to strengthen civic education programs on election in sukus so as to increase citizens' understanding of all processes involved in the election, as it was observed that many people still do not understand electoral processes which creates potential for conflict. The other focus of civic education programs should be on increasing people's understanding of their rights and freedoms to express or exercise their political rights, as it was observed that in some places the practice of forcing and intimidating or putting pressure on people to vote for certain parties remains an issue;
- It is recommended to CNE to facilitate a peace pact prior to elections as was recently done by the Office of President of Republic and the Ministry of Interior's National Directorate of Community Conflict Prevention or Dirasaun Nasionál Prevensaun Konflitu Komunitaria (DNPKK), to assist in disseminating electoral and election campaigning law in a more simplified format where voters and supporters of political parties can easily understand. This is important as our data shows that changes in some rules may have assisted in reducing conflicts, for example regulation on not allowing political parties to transport supporters en masse from one administrative post to another.

Introduction

Timor-Leste has held four (4) parliamentary election, in 2002, 2007, 2012 and 2017. This report seeks to identify areas vulnerable to conflict during the July 22 2017 parliamentary election and comparing this with the number of violent incidents registered in each area during the election. Belun started monitoring from May 1 to July 31 2017 and registered a total of 52 incidents related to the parliamentary election. Monitoring is split into the following phases or periods:

1. Consolidation of political parties and voter registration phase – Belun's observation occurred from May 1 to June 18 2017, and 1 related violent incident was registered on June 12 2017 in Viqueque;
2. Political parties' campaigning phase, observed from June 19 to July 19 2017, and the number of related violent incidents registered during this period is 31;
3. Calm day phase or period – this was observed to start on July 20 – July 21 2017 and there were 3 incidents registered during this period;
4. The election day, taking place on July 22 2017 from 06:00 – 15:00 and the number of violent incidents registered during this day is 11;
5. Vote counting and vote tabulation at municipal and national levels, observed to have started on July 22 2017 from 15:15pm until 00:00am July 31 2017.

Through data obtained from monitoring during the 2017 parliamentary election, Belun presents this report submitted to stakeholders or development partners for their knowledge, peace activities or program design, and for their responses to key and general recommendations identified so that measures to prevent electoral violence in future elections can be implemented.

Based on EWER system monitoring and using tablet for data computing, a total of 52 electoral violence incidents were registered in 12 municipalities, including the Special Administrative Region of Oecusse. The only municipality where no electoral violent incident was registered was Covalima. With the findings, it is safe to state that the election was relatively peaceful as there were no serious violent incidents registered, despite few noteworthy cases, relative to that of those previous elections.

Comparing Belun's findings with the findings of the European Union Election Observation Mission and that of the Observatório da Igreja Para os Assuntos Sociais (OIPAS) or The Observatory of Church for Social Issues, L'a'o Hamutuk and Fundasaun Mahein, it was noted that 'the whole election process from the beginning of political campaigning until the result announcement went well and in peaceful manners and all citizens participated enthusiastically in this democratic process.'²

Methodology

Belun and its Early Warning Early Response (EWER) system fielded 120 people to monitor for violent incidents during the 2017 parliamentary election. As field monitors Belun's 13 municipal coordinator also used tablets for data computing by updating or sending violent incident reports directly to Belun's online data portal after collecting data from EWER's 86 field monitors (64 male and 22 female) who acted as local election observer from 43 administrative posts, complemented by Belun's 21 national observers that included 7 managers of the EWER system and 14 additional staff.

Two field monitors were stationed in each administrative post to monitor for both election-related violent incidents and non-election related violent incidents, and to track changes in economic, socio-cultural, political situations in each area. At the administrative post level, field monitors worked with Belun's municipal coordinators, Rede Prevensaun no Responde Konfliktu (RPRK) and the Conflict Prevention and Response Network (CPRN) to collect data on incidents followed by verification processes before data was sent through tablet to the online data portal.

The EWER management team then compiled and collected data, analyzed data and wrote relevant reports and recommendations which would then be used for advocacy purposes to all relevant stakeholders in Timor-Leste.

² 1). Preliminary Declaration March 22 2017 – Timor-Leste run a well-organized and peaceful presidential election from European Union; 2). Press Conference on 2017 Presidential Election from OIPAS 3). The 2017-2022 Presidential Election Observation Report from NGO La'o Hamutuk. 4). The 2017 Parliamentary Election Report, Mahein Nia Lian Nú. 124, 31 July 2017.

Data Analysis

EWER's findings³ of electoral violent incidents for the July 22 Parliamentary election were based on monitoring in the period “before, during and after”. In the “before period”, the monitoring focused on political parties’ consolidation and campaigning, including the calm days or period.

In the “during” period the monitoring focused on the election day and in the “after period” the monitoring focused on processes involved in vote counting and vote tabulation at municipal and national level. In monitoring from one phase to another (there were 5 phases in monitoring as indicated in table 1), the team detected some violent incidents in the whole election process from the beginning until such time where government formation processes were negotiated.

Based on findings from monitoring from May 1 until July 31 of 2017, Belun’s 120 observers registered a total of 52 violent incidents. Based on diagram curve 1, it was noted that during political parties’ consolidation phase, political parties travelled from the national level to local level and there was only one incident registered on June 12 2017 in Viqueque.

Comparative analysis of data on violent incidents in election from 2007 to 2017 shows that most violent incidents occurred during the political campaigning phase and this was no different in the 2017 Parliamentary election as the number of violent incidents registered during this period was 31, reducing drastically during the ‘calm days’ period with only 3

Tempu ba Prosesu Eleisaun		Data Insidente hahú husi 1 Maiu to'o 1 Augustu 2017	Munisípiu (insidente?)	Insidente	Totál Insidente kada Tempu
Antes Eleisaun	Tempu Konsolidasaun no resesiamentu Partidu Polítiku Sira hahú husi (1 Maiu 2017 - 18 Juñu 2017)	1 - 31 Maiu	0	0	0
		12 Juñu	Vikeké (1)	1	1
	Tempu Kampania Partidu Polítiku Sira Hahú Husi (19 Juñu - 19 Julu 2017)	24 Juñu	Manufahi (1)	1	31
		28 Juñu	Dili (1)	1	
		30 Juñu	Manufahi (1)	1	
		1 Julu	Vikeké (2)	2	
		4 Julu	Bobonaro (1)	1	
		8 Julu	Ainaro (1)	1	
		9 Julu	Lautem (2), Baucau (2)	4	
		10 Julu	Lautem (1), Dili (1)	2	
		11 Julu	Bobonaro (1), Dili (1), Baucau (1)	3	
		13 Julu	Lautem (1), Dili (1) no Aileu (1)	3	
		15 Julu	Oe-Kusse (1)	1	
		16 Julu	Vikeké (1), Baucau (1), Likisa (1), Aileu (1)	4	
		17 Julu	Dili (1)	1	
	18 Julu	Dili (1), Baucau (2)	3		
19 Julu	Lautem (1), Baucau (1), Dili (1)	3			
Tempu Hakmatek	20 Julu	Likisa (1)	1	3	
	21 Julu	Manatuto (1), Aileu (1)	2		
Durante Eleisaun	Tempu Eleisaun hahú husi Oras (07:00 - 15:00)	22 Julu	Baucau (5), Dili (5), Ermera (1)	11	11
Depois Eleisaun	Tempu kontajen no Apuramentu Munisípiu no Nasionál hahú husi dia 22 Julu, Oras 15:15 - dia 31 Julu 2017, Oras 24:00.	22 Julu	Lautem (2)	2	6
		23 Julu	Bobonaro (1), Oe-Kusse (2)	3	
		25 Julu	Oe-Kusse (1)	1	
		26 - 31 Julu	La Akontese	0	
Totál Insidente Jerál				52	52

Tabela-1: Insidente Violénsia ba Kada Tempu iha Eleisaun Parlamentar 22 Julu 2017, observasaun husi dia 1 Maiu to'o 31 Julu 2017.

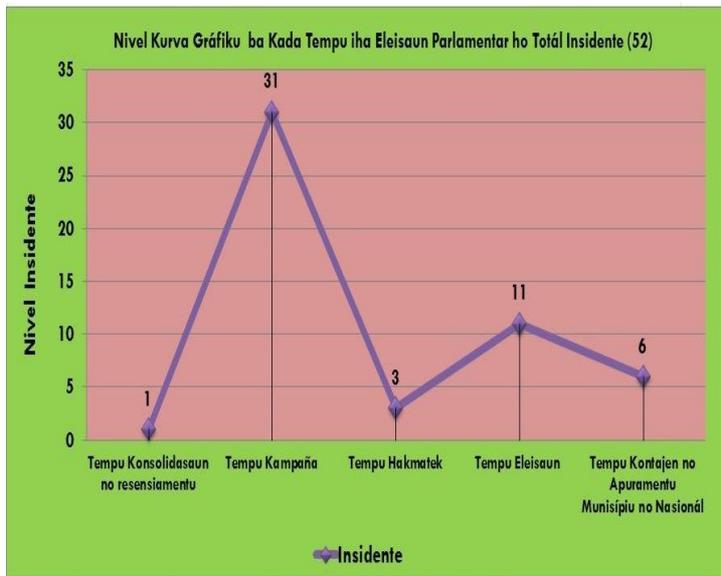


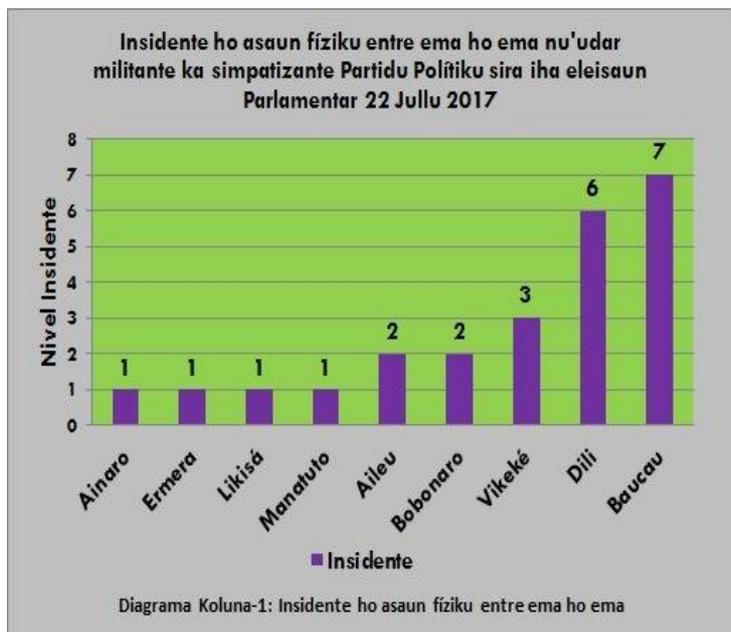
Diagrama Kurva-1: Insidente Violénsia iha Eleisaun Parlamentar 22 Julu 2017

³ The EWER system or AtReS covered 43 Administrative Posts (from a total of 65) in 275 sukus from a total of 452 in 12 municipals and the special region of Oe-cusse Ambeno.

incidents registered, and rising again on election day where polling stations opened from 06:00 to allow for polling staff at each stations to prepare voting materials.⁴ People at each polling station included the president of the polling station with his/her team, polling staff from STAE and observers from political parties. Observation started from 07:00am to 15:00pm. Observation on the election day continued after the closure of the polling station from 15:15pm to 00:00am on July 31 2017 during the vote counting and tabulation at both municipal and national levels and during the announcement of results.

Breaking down violent incidents, from 52 incidents, 24 incidents involved physical force where people attacked each other physically, including rock throwings; 7 incidents involved destruction of things such as attributes of political parties; and the remaining 21 incidents accounted for other violent incidents (the use of words) such as people arguing and shouting at one another.

From the figures on physical altercations among people (24), Baucau registered the highest number with 7 incidents followed by Dili with 6 incidents. Viqueque registered 3 incidents while Aileu and Bobonaro registered 2 incidents each. Ainaro, Ermera, Likisa and Manatuto each registered 1 incident. Covalima, Lautem, Manufahi and Oecusse registered no violent incidents between people. Please refer to diagram column 1 for further information.



At the administrative post level, physical altercation between people were registered in Baucau Administrative Post with 5 incidents, Dom Aleixo with 3 incidents and Remexio, Atauro, Laga and Viqueque with 2 incidents each. Atabae, Emera, Maliana, Manatuto, Maubara, Vera Cruz and Hatu-Udo registered 1 incident each. Administrative Posts not mentioned here implies that no physical altercation among people was registered in their areas.

Based on data compilation from May to July 2017, 1 violent incident was registered after the election where there was physical altercation between people during the vote counting process. The incident occurred on July 23 2017 around 4:30am, where militants from political party A were involved in a fight with militants from Political Party B in Aldeia Timatan, Suku Ritabou, Maliana Administrative Post, Municipality of Bobonaro. The incident took place as a result of dissatisfaction from some people over the result of vote counting.

It started as a militant from one political party saw a greater number of votes for another political party, provoking physical violence with a militant from the winning party. Militants of the winning party responded with further fighting and rock throwing. PNTL then intervened, calmed the situation down and arrested 2 males for further investigation while conducting a search for others involved.

⁴ Sensitive materials include (ballot box, ink, voting bulletin) and non-sensitive materials include cabins and voter list, etc.

The following list includes brief information about the 24 incidents where physical altercation occurred:

1. On June 12 2017, around 20:30pm an unknown person assaulted two men when the two men were on their way back from the consolidation activities of a political party in the area of Jembatan Gantung, Aldeia Lamaklaran, Suku Karaubalo, Viqueque Administrative Post, Municipality of Viqueque. In this incident, unknown person threw rocks at the two victims which resulted in the two victims being taken to hospitals for treatment. Police are still searching for the unknown person.
2. On July 1 2017, around 19:35pm militants of a political party destroyed 4 houses and personal effects inside these houses in Aldeia Kantor and Aldeia Iramer, Suku Luka, Viqueque Administrative Post, Municipality of Viqueque. The incident took place due to suspicion that some people had provoked first and thrown rocks at a convoy of supporters of a political party which was travelling from Lacluta Administrative post. Militants from the political party reacted to this by destroying communities' houses, including 1 motorbike and things in the houses. The same militants also tore down stickers of other political parties that were posted in some of the places. Police and local authorities intervened and the case has been filed for further investigation.
3. On July 18 2017, around 19:00pm in Suku Bahu, Aldeia Anaulo, Baucau Administrative Post, Municipal Baucau, a confrontation occurred between the PNTL and militants or supporters of a political party. The incident occurred as supporters of a political party, which was scheduled to carry out a political campaigning on July 19 2017, rode motorbikes in large groups through the municipality with a political party's attributes but without prior approval. Police intervened, but the supporters continued to provoke and as a result, PNTL members took a tougher measure against them by shooting a gas canister to disperse the group and threaten them with force. A person was wounded from police beating. The case has not been resolved and is still under investigation.
4. On July 22 2017 at 11:15am an incident took place in Aldeia Eroho, Suku Ponilala, Ermera Administrative Post, Municipality of Ermera. Members of two different political parties were involved in this incident. It started when a member of a political party said some demeaning words to a member of another political party who was a member of parliament. The member of parliament who was in the car when the other person said something to him then got out from his car and slapped in the face the person who was deriding him. PNTL who was providing security at the site immediately intervened and the case has been brought before the court.

Data shows that majority of incidents occurred because:

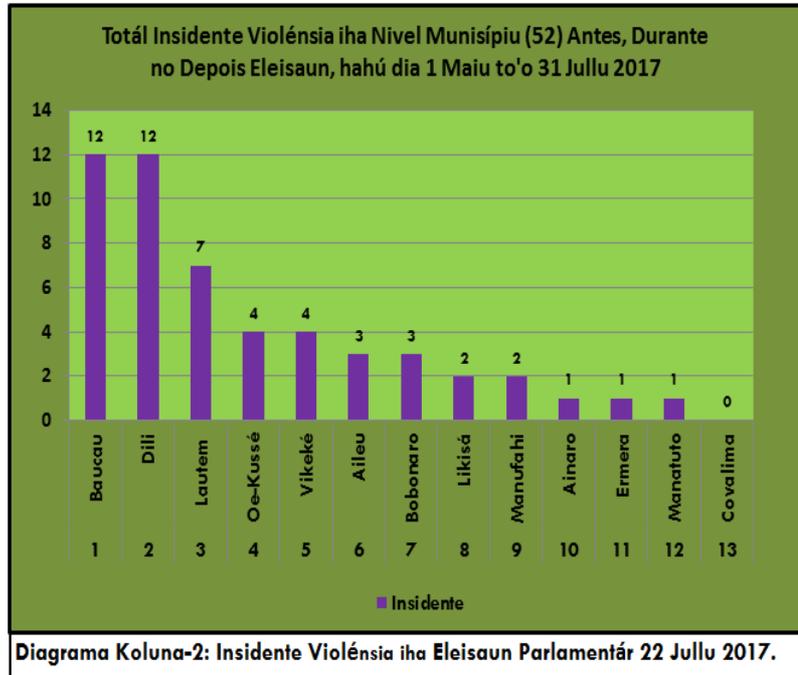
1. Supporters of different political parties who provoked each other during political campaigning and during vote counting process, registering 31 incidents—for example, deriding or devaluing or defamation, shouting at one another, rock-throwing, fighting and stealing other political parties' attributes;
2. Voters and polling center staff argued because some voters did not understand rules and voting process, with 4 incidents registered for such cases
3. Some voters understood voting process but chose to not follow the rules. 3 incidents were registered for this, for example, taking pictures inside the voting cabin and attending polling stations wearing political party's attributes;

Relatóriu Incidente Violéncia Eleitoral ba Eleisaun Parlamentár, 2017

4. Voters fought over who should go first in queue lines, losing patience and making unnecessary remarks (4 cases were registered for these);
5. A voter from a different suku who had not replaced his/her electoral card insisted on voting in the suku in which he was not meant to vote.

From diagram column 2, municipalities with the highest number of incident were Baucau and Dili with 12 incidents each, followed by Lautem with 7 incidents.

RAEOA and Viqueque sat at third position with 4 incidents. The least number of incidents in descending order were registered in Aileu and Bobonaro with 3 each, Likisa and Manufahi with 2 each and Ainaro, Ermera and Manatuto with 1 each. Covalima on the other hand registered no violent incidents during the 2017 parliamentary election.



At Administrative Post level, Baucau Administrative post registered the highest number of violent incidents with 10, Dom Aleixo of Dili and Lautem registered second highest with 4 incidents each, and Cristo Rei, Lospalos, Oesilo, Remexio and Viqueque came in third with 3 cases each. For other administrative posts, please refer to Table 2.

Nú.	Postu Administrativu	Insidente	Nú.	Postu Administrativu	Insidente
1	Baucau	10	12	Bazartete	1
2	Dom Aleixo	4	13	Ermera	1
3	Lautem	4	14	Maliana	1
4	Cristo Rei	3	15	Manatuto Villa	1
5	Lospalos	3	16	Maubara	1
6	Oesilo	3	17	Metinaro	1
7	Remexio	3	18	Nain Feto	1
8	Vikeke	3	19	Ossu	1
9	Atauro	2	20	Vera Cruz	1
10	Laga	2	21	Hatu-Udo	1
11	Same	2	22	Pasabe	1
12	Atabae	2			
Totál Incidente Jerál					52

Tabela-2: Incidente violéncia nivel Postu Administrativu ba Eleisaun Parlamentar 22 Jullu 2017, observasaun komesa husi 1 Maiu to'o 31 Jullu 2017

Session 1: Incidents registered during the Parliamentary Election Campaign Period

Relatóriu Insidente Violénsia Eleitorál ba Eleisaun Parlamentár, 2017

Tempu ba Prosesu Kampaña Eleisaun			
Data Insidente hahú husi 19 Juñu - 19 Jullu 2017	Oras Akontese (OTL)	Munisípiu (Insidente)	Insidente
24 Juñu	14:50	Manufahi (1)	1
28 Juñu	21:00	Dili (1)	1
30 Juñu	9:00	Manufahi (1)	1
1 Jullu	19:30	Vikeke (1)	2
	19:35	Vikeke (1)	
4 Jullu	23:00	Bobonaro (1)	1
8 Jullu	23:25	Ainaro (1)	1
9 Jullu	10:00	Lautem (1)	4
	10:20	Lautem (1)	
	17:30	Baucau (1)	
	21:45	Baucau (1)	
10 Jullu	12:30	Manufahi (1)	2
	15:00	Dili (1)	
11 Jullu	3:00	Dili (1)	3
	16:45	Baucau (1)	
	23:00	Bobonaro (1)	
13 Jullu	2:00	Aileu (1)	3
	10:50	Lautem (1)	
	20:00	Dili (1)	
15 Jullu	8:00	Oe-Kusse	1
	1:30	Vikeke (1)	
	16:00	Baucau (1)	
	18:35	Likisa (1)	
16 Jullu	kalan (asuntu deskofesidu)	Aileu (1)	4
17 Jullu	21:14	Dili (1)	1
18 Jullu	14:20	Dili (1)	3
	16:45	Baucau (1)	
	19:00	Baucau (1)	
19 Jullu	10:25	Lautem (1)	3
	16:25	Baucau (1)	
	18:30	Dili (1)	
Totál Insidente kada Tempu			31

Tabela-3: Totál Insidente iha Tempu Kampaña Eleisaun Parlamentar 22 Jullu 2017

were registered after voting closed, and hence were grouped into incidents that occurred during the vote counting process. Baucau and Dili registered the highest number of incidents with 5 incidents each. From a total of 11 incidents, only 1 incident involved fighting between people and this occurred in Ermera, and 2 incidents were registered for destruction of things or attributes of political parties in Dili. Other incidents (8) range from arguing between voters and polling staff, to people not understanding the voting process as noted in some polling stations.

Session 3: Violent incidents registered during vote counting, vote tabulation at municipal and national levels and on result announcement day

Table 5 shows the number of incidents registered after the election (from 15:00pm on July 22 2017 until 00:00am July 31 2017). 6 incidents were registered during vote counting and vote tabulation at municipal and national levels. From this total, 3 were registered in RAEOA, 2 in Lautem and

Table 3 below shows that the number of incidents registered during the campaigning period that started from June 20 2017 and ended on July 19 2017 at 18:30pm was 31.

Dili and Baucau registered the highest number with 7 each, followed by Lautem with 5 incidents, Viqueque with 3, Aileu, Bobonaro and Manufahi with 2 each, and Likisa and Ainaro with 1 each. Municipalities not mentioned in table 3 implies no incidents were registered during that period.

Session 2: Incidents registered during the election day

Table 4 below shows that the number of electoral violence incidents registered during the election day (July 22 2017), where the monitoring started from 06:00am with preparation for voting at each polling station and voting from 07:00am until 15:00pm, is 11 incidents from a total of 13 incidents registered on July 22 2017. Two incidents

Data Akontese	Oras Akontese Observa husi 06:00 - 15:00 (OTL)	Munisípiu (Insidente)	Insidente
22 Jullu 2017	7:00	Baucau	1
	7:20	Baucau	1
	7:35	Baucau	1
	7:45	Dili	1
	8:00	Dili	1
	8:30	Dili	1
	9:45	Baucau	1
	10:00	Dii	1
	11:15	Ermera	1
	13:45	Dili	1
	14:54	Baucau	1
Totál Insidente			11

Tabela-4: Totál Insidente iha tempu ka loron eleisaun parlamentar 22 Jullu 2017

Tempu ba Prosesu Eleisaun	Data - Oras Akontese	Munisípiu/Postu (insidente?)	Insidente
Tempu kontajen no Apuramentu nivel Munisípiu no Nasionál hahú husi dia 22 Jullu, Oras 15:15 - 31 Jullu 2017 no remata iha Oras 24:00. OTL	22 Jullu - Oras: 15:45	Lautem/Moro (1)	1
	22 Jullu - Oras: 18:00	Lautem/Lospalos (1)	1
	23 Jullu - Oras: 01:35	Oe-Kusse/Oesilo (1)	1
	23 Jullu - Oras: 04:30	Bobonaro/Maliana (1),	1
	23 Jullu - Oras: 22:15	Oe-Kusse/Oesilo (1)	1
	25 Jullu - Oras: 08:00	Oe-Kusse/Passabe (1)	1
	26 - 31 Jullu	La Akontese	0
Totál Insidente Jerál			6

Tabela-5: Insidente Violénsia ba Tempu iha Eleisaun Parlamentar 22 Jullu 2017

1 in Bononaro. From July 26 2017 until July 31 2017, no election-related violent incidents took place even though many people followed vote tabulation online through direct access to CNE's website www.cne.tl. The number of national tabulation corresponded with the number of votes tabulated at the municipal level and confirmed that Fretilin received the highest number of votes with 168,480 votes or 29,65% of total votes, and is entitled to 23 seats, CNRT with a total of 167,345 votes or 29,45% of total votes and is entitled to 22 seats, PLP with a total 60,098 votes or 10,57% of total votes and is entitled to 8 seats, PD with 55,608 votes or 9,78% of the total votes and is entitled to 7 seats and the last party, KHUNTO with 36,547 votes or 6.43% of the total votes and is entitled to 5 seats.

Comparative Analysis

The total number of incidents registered during the 2007 parliamentary election period (from May 28 to August 9 2007) throughout Timor-Leste was 162, including all incidents related to violence, electoral crimes and irregularities. During the July 20 2012 parliamentary election (from June 4 to July 20 2012) 76 incidents were reported, including 46 incidents involving physical altercation, 11 electoral crimes and 19 irregularities. 52 incidents were recorded in the 2017 parliamentary election period (from June 20 – July 22 2017 including the vote tabulation and announcement period). This included

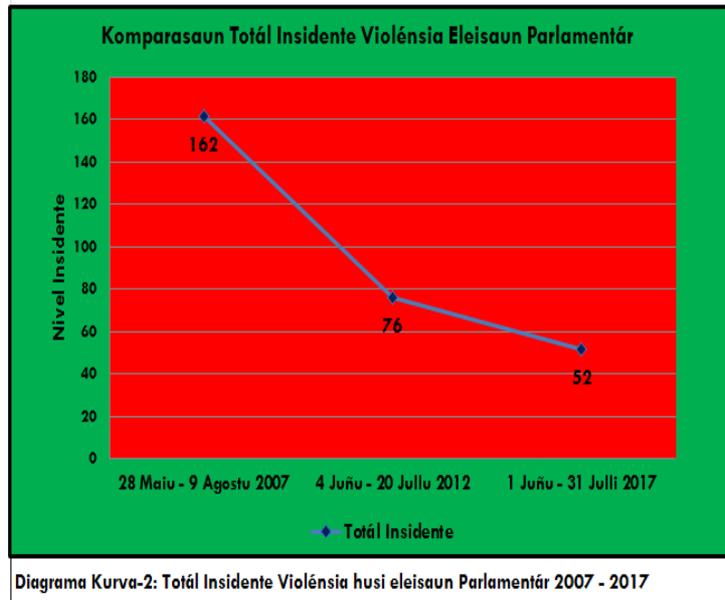


Diagrama Kurva-2: Total Insidente Violénsia husi eleisaun Parlamentár 2007 - 2017

24 incidents involving physical altercations between militants and supporters; 21 incidents of verbal violence); and 7 incidents related to physical actions against belongings or attributes of political parties.

From experience and reference to the 2007, 2012 and 2017 elections, monitoring findings show that there has been a significant decline in the number of serious incidents from one election to another. As a new nation that has begun to develop strong institutions for human rights and democracy, the smaller number of serious violent incidents registered from one election to another represents a success and significant change.

Conclusion

Belun's analysis shows that 52 incidents were registered during the July 22 2017 election. The number corresponded with Belun's previous assessment report on electoral violence potential where it says that "there will be no significant conflict potential, only small potential".

Many incidents occurred during political campaigning. Data from the past three parliamentary elections from 2007, 2012 and 2017, the number of incidents during campaigning are always higher than the number of incidents on election day and after election day. It should be acknowledged that there have been many reports and recommendations from civil society organization including Belun, Fundasaun Mahein, OIPAS, La'o Hamutuk and others to CNE, STAE and to political parties to improve election process and this change is very positive.

It can be argued that the resulting situation is partly due to Belun's recommendations from assessment reports on past elections to political parties, CNE and STAE titled "Avaliasaun ba

Potensiál Konfliktu Durante Períodu Eleisaun Nasionál 2017” or Assessment of Conflict Potential during 2017 National Elections, which was published on March 27 2017. Reports included recommendations to political parties not to transport militants or supporters from one municipality to a different post administrative or municipality, because this has the potential to create conflict or provocations among supporters, and can also create traffic accidents, and other key recommendations.”⁵

Other actions that managed to minimize tensions and conflicts during the election has been NGO Belun’s action plan and financial support to carry out civic education programs in suku about peace, democracy and political rights of citizens, as well as concrete action in signing National Unity Pact which involved leaders of political parties at municipal and some Administrative Posts in Baucau, Viqueue, Ermera, Likisa and others. Actions from the Komisaun Justisu e Paz (Commission for Justice and Peace) together with the Komisaun Juventude Dioseze Dili included a ‘March for Peace’, a musical concert, a national seminar, and the promotion of peace by the Dili Catholic Bishop with political party leaders.

These activities have made some changes and minimized the escalation of violent conflicts during the election. Fundasaun Mahein’s report also mentioned “the efforts and the hard-work of leaders of political parties, in putting the interest of the state above all else and their compliance to ensure peace and stability during electoral campaigning until result announcement through National Unity Pact organized by the President of the Republic, the Ministry of Interior with National Directorate of Communities Conflict Prevention and other events organized by Timorese have helped promote peace and stability. This historic moment is a testament to Timorese capacity and maturity in leaping over this obstacle⁶.

Belun’s observation during the campaign period is that some political parties campaigned well and behaved in ways that reflected what Belun recommended above. Political parties did apply the campaigning model where political parties’ national structure was the one travelled to their supporters and communities at administrative posts, with campaigning carried out there. This campaign model greatly lessened the likelihood of violent incidents and conflicts during the July 22 2017 parliamentary election. The same impression was noted in the European Union’s Preliminary Report that Timor-Leste successfully organized the parliamentary elections in peaceful environment⁷.

Data analysis shows that Dili and Baucau registered the higher number of violent incidents compared with the other municipalities. It was also noted that the two municipalities have been target spots for political party campaigning for parliamentary elections in 2017 – 2022 and they have been the spots Fretilin, CNRT, PD and PLP carried out huge rallies, and it was also noted that some parties continued to transport supporters from administrative posts in Baucau and from other municipalities to Baucau. This was also noted in the Municipality of Dili. This has

⁵ Report on the 2017 Presidential Election Violent Incident Monitoring, p.3; Recommended to CNE to ensure citizens’ participation and rights in the democratic processes, including carrying out stronger observation in the upcoming parliamentary election, particularly in rural areas; PNTL to maintain law and order during election to ensure stability and freedom during election; Political leaders to focus on party programs, vision, missions and not focused on defaming which can then lead to violent incidents between supporters and recommend to leaders of political parties and their success team that one important indicator of a capacity of a political party to be in government is their ability to organize, manage and control their supporters this is because some supporters tended to fall out of control; recommend also to leaders of political parties to not transport their supporters from one municipal to another to prevent conflict incidents and traffic accidents from happening

⁶ 2017 Parliamentary Election Observation Report, Mahein’s Voice no. 124, 31 of July 2017;

⁷ Preliminary Declaration March 22 2017, from ‘European Union Election Observation Mission’, Timor-Leste, Presidential and Parliamentary Elections, 2017.

been noted to have raised some tension in these two municipalities. It was also noted that some young supporters liked to make big noises using motorbikes rallying in groups around the city.

Many incidents during the 2017 Parliamentary Election occurred because of provocations among supporters of political parties in the form of demeaning one another, arguing, rock throwing and sometimes leading to fights breaking out during campaigning and vote counting. Supporters of political parties were sometimes not happy to access election results because their parties did not win. People also used the event to bet their money on which political parties would win election and those on the losing sides were not happy and started creating problems.

Other issues included voters and polling staff not understanding rules governing conducts in polling centers and they did not conduct all the processes involved in voting at polling centers. Some people were aware of the rules but chose not to abide by the rules and came to vote wearing attributes of political parties. Some voters did not even know voting times and centers. While there has always been concerns, the smaller number of serious violent incidents in this election compared to previous elections shows that democracy in Timor-Leste is showing progress as a post-conflict countries.

Analysis of CNR data shows that 'total number of registered voters was 760, 907, and out this 583, 956 or 76.74% were confirmed to have participated in this election. The number of non-participation was 176,951 or 23.26% of total registered voters, valid votes was 568,070 or 97.28%, and invalid votes was 15,817 or 2.72%.⁸ Compared to the CNE Timor-Leste standard, the election was a success as the proportion of participation was 76.74%.

Recommendations and Immediate Actions for Future Elections

21 political parties competed in the July 22 2017 Parliamentary Election. Belun recommends the following:

1. It is recommended to STAE to provide an impartial guide to polling staff so that they can carry out their duties impartially because it was noted that in some polling stations some staff did not carry out their task in neutral and impartial manners, and in some places people who worked as polling staff were chosen from a particular political party;
2. It is recommended that national civil society organizations such as Belun, OIPAS, Fundasaun Alola, FONGTIL, HAK, Lao Hamutuk, international agencies IFES, IRI, observers from the European Union (EU) and academic institutions, organize a meeting discussing ways to split clear roles and responsibilities in monitoring, how to ensure smooth communication and sharing of election-related information for advocacy before carrying out actual election monitoring activities. They can also support each other to strengthen civic education programs for future elections;
3. It is recommended to the international community, such as the European Union, to support international monitoring agencies to collaborate particularly on fostering relations to develop the capacities of political parties, and on how to improving training to political party staff assigned to do oversight at each polling station such as what they need to do in this role, how to lodge complaints and accompaniment from polling stations to the national office of CNE;

⁸ Data retrieved from the website of the National Election Commission or Comissão Nacional de Eleições/CNE – (www.cne.tl), July 22 2017 Parliamentary Election.

4. It is recommended to CNE to continue civic education initiatives on election processes in sukus together with local government so that all citizens understand all the processes involved in election, as it was noted that many people are still not familiar with electoral processes and this has potential to result in violence. Civic education initiatives can also focus on increasing people's knowledge about their rights and freedoms to express or exercise their political rights because it was noted that in some places, some people still forced and intimidated others to vote for specific political parties;
5. It is recommended that political leaders, during campaigning, focus on political parties' programs and visions, and not on defaming or degrading others, so as to avoid provoking violent incidents between supporters of political parties;
6. It is recommended that the PNTL maintains law and order during campaigning and election processes to ensure stability and freedom during the election. It is also recommended that the PNTL continue to be impartial in security provisions during future elections.

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Annex:

List of 2017 Parliamentary Election Observers from NGO Belun, including staff and EWER monitors.